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ABSTRACT

This paper explores two interrelated dimensions of access--opportunities for progression and educational orientation, and offers various insights into what has been termed the "democratic imperative" in American higher education. It also addressed the responsiveness of institutions and faculty in access and other programs to the needs and experiences of an older, more diverse student body. Interview data showed that community colleges provided an entree to post-initial education for many adults and young people from minority and low-income groups. Many poorly educated adults from the inner city progressed from developmental studies to a university degree; some university colleges recruited poorly educated adult workers and used experiential methods to enable many to become effective students. However, many other inner-city students entered developmental programs but dropped out before entering the mainstream. Attrition rates were high in all programs regardless of philosophy or method. Evidence indicated retention rates improved when the curriculum was derived from student experience and related to problems of inner-city life. As for progression, the majority of community college students enrolled for short vocational courses on completion of developmental studies. The choice effectively barred them from the option of transfer to a university. The access cause in universities also seemed on the wane. (Appendixes include 146 references, a 68-item bibliography, and questionnaire.) (YLB)

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ED356385

A VIEW FROM THE MARGINS

ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR ADULTS IN INNER-CITY AMERICA

Linden West

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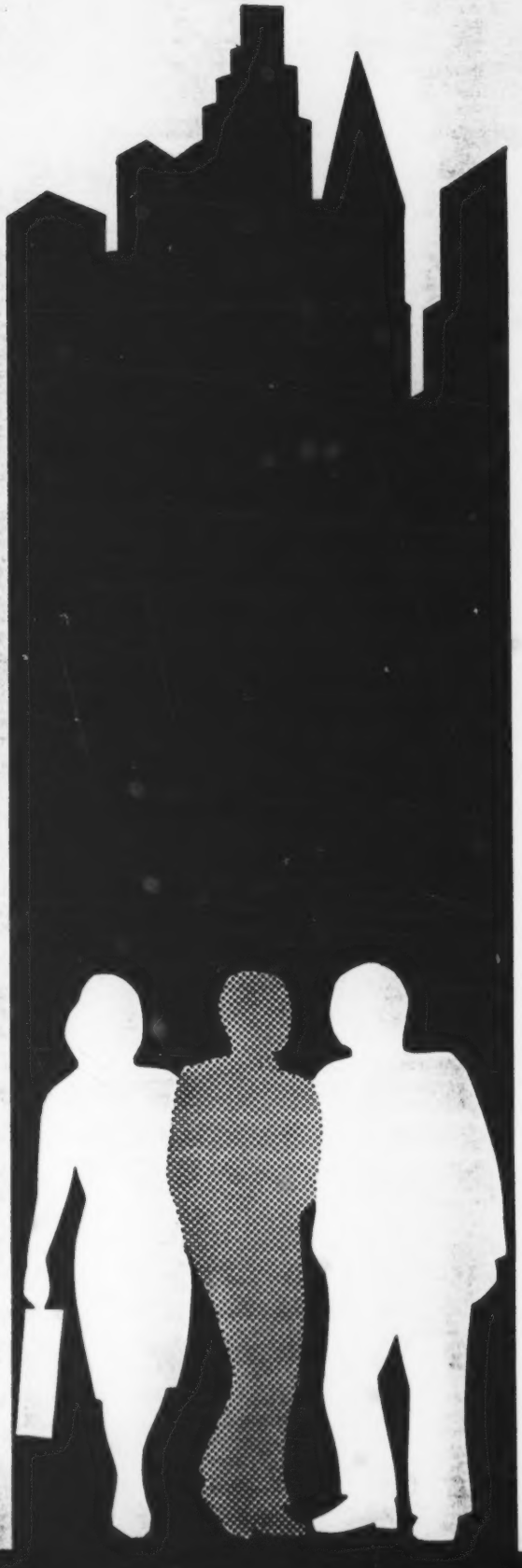

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DIPLOMA/MA IN CONTINUING EDUCATION, OPEN SEMINAR SERIES,
OCCASIONAL PAPER ONE

A VIEW FROM THE MARGINS: ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR ADULTS IN INNER-CITY AMERICA.

LINDEN WEST, MARCH, 1992

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PREFACE

> *It's the third world down there! Puerto Ricans, West Indians, Haitians, Dominicans, Cubans, Columbians, Hondurans, Koreans, Chinese, Thais, Vietnamese, Ecuadoreans, Panamanians, Filipinos, Albanians, Senegalese and Afro-Americans! Go visit the frontiers....do you really think you are insulated from the third world?* (Tom Wolfe, *Bonfire of the Vanities* (Picador) pp. 13-14).

This paper derives from a visit I made to America in 1990. It was presented, in abbreviated form, to an Open Seminar in the School of Continuing Education at the University of Kent in November 1991. The seminar, one of a series devoted to current issues in the education of adults, was organised in conjunction with the School's Diploma/MA course in Continuing Education. The publication is the first of what will be a regular series focusing on central issues in the field.

I went to America to learn more about their experiences of providing wider access to higher education for adult learners and specifically to study the role of key 'access' institutions such as community colleges in extending opportunities to traditionally under-represented people and groups. I believed there might be lessons from America to guide policy and practice in this country as we seek to extend more opportunities to adults from working class and ethnic minority communities.

In particular I wanted to know about the success of community colleges in recruiting poor and under-educated adults into the system, in equipping them for study and in enabling a significant number to transfer to university. The numbers able to progress, over time, from basic return to learn courses to a bachelors degree might be an important indicator of how accessible American higher education truly is to people from diverse backgrounds.

I also wanted to examine a related issue: the pedagogic response of colleges and universities to large numbers of adults in the system. Organising access and return to learn courses and teaching in university adult education have taught me the importance of developing student-centred methods, particularly among adults lacking confidence in their ability to succeed. I start from the premise that they, and for that matter many young people, will learn best in an environment which affirms and values prior learning and wider experience. I wanted to learn from American access educators about their experience, what works best and why.

The paper explores these two interrelated dimensions of access - opportunities for progression and educational orientation - and offers various insights into what has been termed the 'democratic imperative' in American higher education. The conclusions I have reached are provisional: there is a need for a more comprehensive study of educational methods and student experience across more institutions. I talked only to a small number of educators and students in a limited number of settings. Nonetheless, I believe this study offers an important initial perspective on the

accessibility of American higher education, structurally and pedagogically, to people on the margins.

The visit and study would not have been possible without help from specific individuals and organisations. I would like to thank, in particular, Alec Barbrook, Gaie Davidson, Richard Gorringe, Milton Stern and Geoffrey Thomas for their invaluable advice. To Mary Calthrop and Dinah Drake for administrative assistance; to Dorothy Golman for her constructive comments on a late draft and to Helen Reynolds for her constant encouragement to finish the paper. Also to the British Council, the British Association for American Studies and the Department of Education and Science for their financial support. I hope everyone concerned will agree that the study makes a contribution to understanding more of the struggle to make higher education accessible, and more responsive, to the peoples of America's 'third world'.

LINDEN WEST,

UNIVERSITY OF KENT AT CANTERBURY,

MARCH, 1992.

CHAPTER 1, INTRODUCTION, ACCESS AND THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Increased access to higher education is now firmly on the British educational and political agenda. The elite model of higher education in which only 15% of the population, mostly drawn from white middle class 18-21 year olds, participates, is under assault from many quarters. A consensus has emerged that we should move towards a mass model of higher education on American lines.

There are many indicators of changed times. In its 1987 White Paper[1] the Government called for increased access (and also explicitly recognised the Access course route into higher education) while in 1990 a Secretary of State advocated a doubling of participation rates to 30% by the end of the century.[2] This target has been confirmed in the 1991 White Paper which also calls for an expansion of adult access to higher education and more part-time study opportunities.[3]

Like the Government, opposition parties have supported the cause of wider access and called for greater priority to be given to it. Despite little or no extra money on offer from Government, or promised by the Opposition, the access cause has moved a long way in a short time.

Access has other influential supporters. A major report, sponsored by British Petroleum and written under the auspices of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce, has recommended a minimum increase of 15% in student numbers by 1995 and 50% by the year 2000.[4] In this report Sir Christopher Ball argues that the nation's economic survival depends on providing more people, including adults, with the opportunity to study in higher education.

The case is made on the grounds of social justice as well as economic necessity. At present only 6% of the population benefits from a university education. The working class, the ethnic minority communities and older learners are badly under-represented.[5] Part-time degree programmes tend to recruit students who have been relatively successful in education first time round[6] and even Access courses recruit disproportionately from the middle class.[7]

It is important to locate this evidence in a wider context: the majority of the adult population has never participated in any form of post-compulsory education or training. Higher, further and even adult education institutions are often seen to be remote and irrelevant institutions.[8] Working class adults and the minority communities are, with the exception of some inner-city initiatives, conspicuous by their absence at every level of the system. Education mirrors the exclusivity of the English class structure: the older you are and the lower your place in the occupational and status hierarchy, the less likely you will be to have participated in any kind of post-school education.

America is often cited as the place to learn from if the

situation is to be improved.'[9] Many more people from diverse backgrounds participate in higher education there than here. The American community college is frequently regarded as the key institution in this process and its form and modus operandi recommended for replication in this country. The colleges, observers note, offer a full range of opportunities from basic literacy through to degree-level courses in local communities thereby increasing initial access as well as opportunities for progression. Kent Education Committee, for example, has argued that:

> *If we in Kent and the UK are to develop the skills and qualities of our population the Community College style has several important features we should take on board. Most notable are the coordination of further education (academic and vocational) with adult education and the offer of the first part of degree courses locally. If the Government's wish to virtually double the proportion of people going through higher education is to be achieved, something along the lines of community colleges could firstly attract more people into self-improvement and secondly overcome financial and personal obstacles to many who would go for a higher level of training and study if they had the chance.*[10]

This is the issue on which I want to focus in my paper, particularly the role of the colleges and other institutions in providing return to learn opportunities and routes through the system for poorly educated learners from the inner-city. To analyze processes and performance partly involves documenting patterns of recruitment, retention and progression. But it also includes examining the educational response of teachers and institutions to a more diverse student body, particularly adults who may initially find academic study difficult and higher education institutions intimidating. What has been the effect of larger numbers of older, unconventional learners on academic cultures and classroom practice?

An opportunity arose to explore these questions when I was invited to deliver a paper on Access in the UK at the annual conference of the National Association for Developmental Education (NADE)[11] in Boston in 1990. (Developmental education is roughly synonymous with access in this country, although not entirely so for reasons discussed below). Thanks to financial support from the Department of Education and Science, the Central Bureau and the British Association for American Studies, I used the opportunity presented by the Conference to visit a number of community colleges and other institutions in the State of Massachusetts. Moreover, the NADE Conference brought together access educators from all over the country enabling me to draw on a wider body of experience and expertise.

I began my research by constructing a number of propositions about American higher and continuing education and the values which inform the system:

that the community colleges have played a key role in recruiting large numbers of working class and minority students into the system.

that the colleges, particularly in access programmes, have pioneered highly student-centred forms of learning for adults who gained little from school which enabled more of them to survive and prosper on returning to education.

that the colleges offer an opportunity for large numbers of adults and young people in the inner-city to progress to university.

that many public universities are committed to broadening access and undertake specific recruitment drives as well as providing extra academic and personal support to poorly prepared adult learners.

that many public universities, as part of a commitment to enhanced access, have become more open to the development of student-centred, experiential styles of teaching and learning as more adults have entered the system.

that continuing education departments in universities, even in elitist institutions such as Harvard, are committed to widening access and offer an alternative route to degree level study for adults from under-represented groups.

finally, that the commitment to wider access is fuelled by a strong meritocratic ideology in which education is conceived as the main instrument to equalise opportunities between social and ethnic groups.

The propositions were to be used heuristically to observe institutional practices and as a framework for interviews. To test their veracity I chose to visit three community colleges with a stated commitment to access and equal opportunity. The first, Bunker Hill in Boston, has been the focus of great attention from a number of further education colleges in the United Kingdom because of its access record.[12] The College operates in a multi-ethnic, working class area of Boston and has established a reputation for its work with poorly educated students.

Roxbury Community College, also in Boston, is located in a neighbourhood which has a majority population of black Americans and Hispanics: the College's student population is in fact 90% non-Caucasian. By contrast, Middlesex Community College in Bedford, twenty miles north of Boston, is set in a more suburban community but was recommended to me on the grounds of its effective promotion of courses among disadvantaged groups.

I also visited the College of Public and Community Service of the

University of Massachusetts. The College, located in inner-city Boston, has recruited students from a range of occupations, including manual workers and others in low status jobs, to train for higher grades of work. The College works with employers and employees to define the skills and knowledge required for particular jobs and highly vocational degrees; it uses these 'competencies' as the basis for the Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning and negotiates with the students the most appropriate ways by which they can achieve other required objectives.

I went in addition to the College of Arts and Sciences in the University because of its policy of accepting transfers from community colleges as well as directly recruiting from under-represented communities in its own right. And finally I visited the Division of Continuing Education at Harvard University to discover how much the Division mirrored, or challenged, the elitist values of the parent institution.

To facilitate the research I designed a questionnaire to be used in interviews and to be completed by those I was unable to talk to at length during my visit. (See appendix 1). The questions encompassed policies on recruitment, the curriculum, student support, including the provision of counselling and guidance services, and the extent and nature of student drop-out.

I taped lengthy interviews with staff in the various institutions and at the NADE Conference and talked to a number of students in different locations. I subsequently requested further information and comment from specific colleges since, as always, some of the most important questions come to mind afterwards. Additionally I have used material from the NADE Conference presentations plus evaluation reports and other documents from specific institutions. Finally I was able to observe and participate in a number of classes at Bunker Hill and in the University of Massachussets (Freshman's preparatory seminars).

Despite this I am conscious of the limitations of the study - I only spent a brief time in America, talked to a small number of people and visited a few institutions. There is no claim to scientific rigour in the selection of the people interviewed, 'selection' was based more on opportunities as they presented themselves.[13] The student perspective is largely absent since there was only limited opportunities to talk at length with those I met. Nevertheless, the observations, interviews, questionnaire returns and other documentation, combined with a review of relevant literature, constitute a body of evidence from which to make a judgement about the accessibility of higher education to adults from the inner-city.

I begin the paper by comparing patterns of participation in higher education in Britain and America as well as identifying the cultural reasons most often given to explain the greater openness of American higher education. I then examine how community colleges set about recruiting large numbers of poorly educated people, construct a typology of the different

educational methods employed in access programmes and analyze the impact of such methods on student performance and retention.

I move on to analyze patterns of progression from developmental and access courses into degree-level study, and explore the criticism that many students enter short vocational programmes which makes it difficult, if not impossible, for them to transfer subsequently to university. The fifth chapter, using three case studies, chronicles some ambivalent attitudes to wider access in the universities. The paper concludes by reflecting on the inadequacy of the propositions in explaining the current position. I will suggest in fact that the struggle to democratise American higher education is far from won. It seems that opportunities for those at the bottom have narrowed as recession and alternative political and institutional agendas have replaced the optimism and aims of the earlier access movement.

I should mention, by way of footnote, that my visit to Massachusetts coincided with a difficult period in higher education. Money has become increasingly scarce as the recession has deepened and Federal and State Administrations have reduced public expenditure. Reductions have been particularly severe in states such as Massachusetts where public spending has historically been high.

Some of the people I interviewed felt extremely vulnerable in present times. Republican Governor William F. Weld has declared that the 'Cadillac style' of services is over to be replaced by a more modest 'Chevrolet'. Most educators take this to mean that expenditure will be reduced even more drastically in the immediate future.[14] The crisis over the public funding of higher education and other public services in the State, and the Union more generally, overshadowed many aspects of my study. As I will explain, neo-liberal policies towards education and public finance need to be at the centre of any analysis of access and educational opportunity in the last decade.

CHAPTER 2, SETTING THE SCENE: ACCESS IN BRITAIN AND AMERICA

Student numbers in American higher education have trebled since the early 1960s. In 1963 enrolment stood at 4.8 million but by 1989 the figure had increased to 12.8 million.[15] The respective figures for the UK were 200,000 and 500,000 over roughly the same period.[16] Britain, post-Robbins, has made progress, however unevenly, in increasing participation rates but it compares unfavourably with the United States: only 15% of the 18-21 age cohort in the UK participates against 55% in the States.[17]

However, like is not strictly being compared with like. The American figures include students in lower level vocational programmes at community colleges which would be classified as further education in this country. There are differences in the nature of first degrees as well. It is generally considered that the academic level of an American degree, at least in the first two years, is below that of its British equivalent. In fact comparisons are difficult since the academic standards of American degrees vary widely. There are no mechanisms such as external examiners or the CNAA to ensure equivalence (except at post-graduate level and for specific professionally related courses). Despite these caveats the main point remains: a higher percentage of people are studying at a higher level in the United States than in Britain.

The contrast between the two countries is especially marked when comparing mature student participation. There are 6.2 million older students taking undergraduate credits in the States (older being defined as over the age of 22).[18] Older students constitute 39% of total enrolments.[19] Indeed, adults have become the new majority in many institutions. In the United Kingdom one estimate puts the typical proportion of mature students in universities to be in the order of 5-7% and in polytechnics and colleges of higher education 10-15%.[20]

One explanation is that matriculation requirements are less exacting in America making it easier for adults to enter the system. Universities select students on the basis of high school diplomas and the completion of reading, writing and mathematics tests. Adults who lack a high school diploma will normally need a pass in a General Education Diploma to gain admission. But the Diploma, equivalent to the school diploma, is well below the academic level of, say, an access course in the UK. Many students gaining admission to university lack essay writing or study skills to cope with degree courses and are placed into community college-type preparatory schemes before embarking on degree-level work.

American institutions, in general, seem more willing to cater for older learners and to take into account the pressures they face in the planning and delivery of programmes.[21] Credit accumulation schemes are a fundamental part of the system. Study opportunities are more flexibly arranged and degrees can be taken in the evening or at week-ends. In some institutions there is a well established tradition of accrediting experiential learning

(learning acquired formally or informally which has not been certificated - that is given formal recognition and status). Such credits may then count towards a degree or vocational qualification.

It is clear that the community colleges provide an *entrée* to the system for large numbers of people, especially those at the bottom of the social hierarchy. The colleges originated at the beginning of the century as secondary education expanded and there were *'too many students chasing too few places'* in the universities.[22] At the same time a number of universities were seeking enhanced status and limited their involvement in general education, concentrating, instead, on higher level work. Community colleges were the means by which many states rapidly expanded higher education opportunities. Growth was no doubt assisted by the fact that they were a cheaper option than establishing new universities.

There are now 1,250 community colleges in America ranging in size from an enrolment fewer than 100 to more than 30,000 students. Around 20% of them, mostly the smaller institutions, are privately funded; the others, the larger comprehensive colleges, are found in every state. Currently enrolment stands at 5 million and the mean age of students is 29. Part-time study patterns often predominate as colleges have recruited adults wanting to change or upgrade their jobs or satisfy their personal interests.

Many new colleges were established in the period from the mid 1950s to the early 70s and during this time the principle of open entry also became the norm. The access cause reached a high water mark in the late 60s as the black freedom and feminist movements insisted that college education should be the right of every American. The slogan fed on the anxiety, prompted by the launch of the Soviet Sputnik, that American international pre-eminence was threatened, and produced a political momentum to expand provision and reduce or even abolish entry requirements. Social justice and the national imperative proved an irresistible combination.

The civil rights movement insisted that no-one should be turned away because of the absence of formal educational qualifications. The colleges were asked to provide the first step on the ladder of opportunity for those groups under-represented in higher education. Their role was to take people as they came and to create an environment in which they could become effective students.

This was to be achieved partly through more 'relevant programmes': black and minority studies would replace the old Euro-centric curriculum. The latter was criticised as elitist and culturally biased, representing the values and artifacts of white America. Students would be better motivated by a curriculum celebrating the achievements of all cultures rather than simply those of the dominant ethnic group. Student experience and background would be placed at the centre of the learning process rather than ignored. And colleges would develop specific access

courses to equip the new students for study in higher education.

Various forms of testing and selection were criticised as the access cause prospered. They were attacked as instruments of exclusion designed to prevent minorities from entering the system and moving into high status occupations. Complete open access, regardless of prior attainment, became a rallying cry for the reform movement. Curriculum relevance and the development of academic support programmes would together ensure more success and mobility for the peoples of the ghetto.

The reform movement attached great importance to the community college's transfer function as a means to increase minority participation in universities and thus to open the labour market at the highest levels to black Americans. Transfer involves students completing an associate degree and then having the option of entering the third year of a four year university programme. The opportunity was considered important because students from under-represented groups were more likely to enrol at their local college in the first instance. Providing the chance of subsequent transfer to a four year institution ensured that they would not be disadvantaged in comparison to those entering university direct.

In some states such as California and Florida the wider access campaign secured statewide agreements on the right of access to university, and exemption from the first two years of study for all students who completed an associate degree at a community college.[23] In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts the transfer compact scheme meant that students were normally accepted into the third year of a first degree programme provided they complete a minimum number of credit hours (exclusive of developmental education), achieved certain grades and studied a number of core subjects including English, mathematics and a natural or physical science.[24]

The civil rights movement's concentration on issues like transfer and increasing the proportions of black Americans in high level occupations, reflects its essentially reformist position. While many activists also stressed the idea of education as a tool to develop the political consciousness of minority communities, the main objective was to secure a more equitable distribution of opportunity within the existing social and economic order, rather than any more fundamental change. The ideology was characteristic of American reform movements in general with their preoccupation with equality of opportunity rather than condition.[25]

The main ideological plank of the campaigners was, therefore, meritocratic. They appealed to a long standing doctrine in American life that opportunities should be made available to people of ability regardless of their social or ethnic background. The access movement stressed Jefferson's ideal of America as a place in which an 'aristocracy of talent' might flourish in contrast to the class bound societies of Europe. This ideal finds expression in much of the access literature. As one recent study of community colleges observed:

> *The culture of America is one in which many, if not most, citizens wish to better themselves, and in which education offers them the means to do so. Education helps to make America the melting pot it is. Associated with this is the right to enter post-secondary education for a period, leave it, and go back later...*[26]

The author points out that such a society was the first to develop secondary education for all and sends more of its citizens to college and university than any other.[27] However unequal the society and the distribution of rewards might be, Americans have, or ought to have, a more or less equal right to succeed. The widespread availability of a college education is the means by which opportunities can be made more equal.

The extent to which this is actually possible is a matter for dispute. Equal opportunity, as egalitarians point out, is a highly problematic concept in an unequal society. In a seminal paper Burton Clark described a central dilemma for community colleges as the conflict between the encouragement to achieve and the realities of limited opportunity in a highly stratified capitalist economy such as America's.[28] He suggested that entitlement to a college education for many students, particularly from the minorities, has meant little more than participation in low level vocational courses. Selection, he argues, has not been abolished in America merely delayed until students have entered the system.

Clarke is not suggesting that higher education simply replicates the existing distribution of opportunities. He argues that higher education is best conceptualised as a battle ground between on the one hand the belief in equal opportunity and greater social mobility, and on the other the tendency for elites to preserve their power and privileges and to restrict access to the most highly prized opportunities. On the whole, Clarke concludes, mobility is not, nor cannot be, as great as the 1960s access movement had hoped.

Research confirms that the distribution of places in higher education between different social and ethnic groups remains far from equal despite the wider access campaigns.[29] Moreover the situation is complicated by the fact that some higher education institutions are more equal than others. There is a marked hierarchy of status in American higher education, with the private Ivy League colleges, such as Harvard, at the top and community colleges at the bottom. Entry to the 'best' colleges and universities offers relative ease of access to elite positions within the occupational hierarchy. Differential status can be considered as an antidote to the wider access, equal opportunity imperative.[30]

Nonetheless it is easier for adults to enter the American system than is the case in Britain. They are encouraged, as one study puts it, *'by the ideology of equal opportunity and the existence of a great diversity of colleges to fit the financial and*

intellectual capacities of most students'.[31] The right to a second, third or even fourth chance is deeply ingrained. The suggestion is that meritocratic ideology, at the least, counteracts perceptions of personal unsuitability or limited room at the top and functions to persuade many adults and youngsters that college or university is for them.

I should add that there are other reasons for the relative openness of higher education institutions in America. Prime among these has been institutional self-interest. Population projections in the 60s and 70s showed a reduction in the numbers of 18 year olds available for higher education.[32] Institutions became concerned about viability as the numbers of potential recruits from traditional backgrounds declined and many colleges and universities were forced to recruit as widely as possible to compensate. The need for students was fuelled by a period of intense inflationary pressure and reductions in public expenditure which meant that more money had to be generated from student fees.[33]

Whatever the motivation, community colleges do attract large numbers of poorly educated adults and young people back into education. Open access, combined with the location of many colleges in inner-city areas, has meant that significant numbers of adults even in the ghettoes are able to mount the first rungs of the ladder. The fact that tuition fees have, in comparison with universities, been low has also been significant although fees have risen steeply in recent years and this is having a detrimental effect on access and student choice.[34] I return to this theme below.

I want now to illustrate, via a series of case studies, how colleges recruit adult and younger students with poor initial education, to examine the nature and success of the developmental programmes most enter and the extent and nature of progression from them. I will show, in the next two chapters, how crucial elements in the access agenda have never been realised: events have taken a somewhat different course than the access movement had hoped.

CHAPTER 3, RECRUITMENT, SUCCESS AND FAILURE IN DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMMES

Community colleges were in large part created, therefore, to offer access to higher education for under-represented groups. Given this role, many colleges have invested in extensive outreach activity and offer various return to learn and academic support programmes for adults and young people whose initial education is too poor for them to cope with mainstream courses or who need additional support in their studies.

I want to illustrate recruitment policies in working class and ethnically mixed communities before analyzing the access programmes students enter and what appears to work best for them and why.

Outreach

Bunker Hill and Roxbury Community Colleges are located in areas of severe urban deprivation where levels of participation in higher and continuing education have historically been low. The Colleges were founded in the early 70s at the height of the wider access campaign. They offer associate degree and certificate courses to assist students to meet personal, career and academic goals. The Colleges' occupational and technical programmes prepare students for careers in electronics, health care, human services, the media, business administration and public service.[35]

They are open access institutions. Bunker Hill serves a large number of people from South East Asia as well as black Americans and Hispanics. Some of the Asians are highly educated but have little English, others lack education. Many people who use the College are, in the words of the College President, *'losers in this society'*. The College's role is *'to help them establish faith in themselves and their abilities'*.[36] The College's commitment to the recruitment of more minority students which is expressly stated in its mission statement has produced tensions in the local community among working class whites. In the early 1970s, for example, there was intense inter-ethnic conflict in Boston and schools and colleges were in the frontline of the troubles. The first black and Hispanic students had to be escorted round the campus by the police.[37]

The Director of Admissions, Janice Thomas, recalls that when she arrived the College's ethnic population comprised only 7% of the student body:

> *That had a lot to do with the nature of Charlestown which is a closely knit neighbourhood in which the college is situated. That group (white, working class and of Irish extraction) wouldn't allow anyone else in....It took years to establish another agenda to make the College more accessible to the minority communities.*[38]

Roxbury Community College is located in a black ghetto. 93% of the population is non-white, 58% of whom are Afro-Americans and 29% Hispanics. There are over 40 native languages spoken in the area.[39] Roxbury, more than Charlestown, represents the alternative face of the opportunity society, a place of inner-city hopelessness, the shoddy, impoverished home of an underclass. The people who live there are largely excluded from the good life, the world of wider opportunity and its material affluence. Many in the population are first generation immigrants who struggle to make sense of American culture and their new world.

The College was established because local activists wanted to create a better deal for the local population. The only community college proposed for Boston in the early 1970's was in Charlestown, an area considered by the minority populations to be hostile to colour. There were no proposals for a college in Roxbury but a campaign, organised by civil rights groups, changed this.[40]

At first the College struggled to survive. It had to operate on a low budget and in sub-standard premises with a white administrator imposed from the outside. In fact he did not last long and the local activists were determined that the College would prosper with or without backing from the State.[41] The College has successfully raised resources from private trusts and corporations to supplement public money and has moved into a brand new, four building campus. Enrolment has grown from 375 in the Autumn of 1973 to over 1,300 day students in 1990 and there are other students in literacy and contract training programmes (arranged in conjunction with local employers). The College currently has a full and part-time staff of over 300.[42]

How do the Colleges set about recruiting people 'underserved by public education'?[43] Most effort goes into attracting younger people still at school rather than adults. Contacts are established with public schools to persuade youngsters to consider higher education and school teachers are assisted in preparing students for college. Bunker Hill staff, for example, provide instruction in study skills as part of the school curriculum. The Colleges try to persuade students from 16 upwards either to return to education or to enter higher education straight from school. A State-wide compact has recently been agreed between the schools, community colleges and public universities. Its purpose is to pair schools with particular institutions in the hope of improving recruitment and forms of preparation as well as to identify those students most likely to need financial aid.

The Colleges try to recruit from among high school drop-outs as well. There is serious attrition of students in the State's schools between the ninth and twelfth grades (between the ages of 14-18) - only 53% of those who begin the ninth grade graduate from school. Since less than 50% of those who graduate from high school go on to college, only 25% of the current ninth grade will begin higher education.[44]

Despite the concentration on recruiting younger students, colleges like Bunker Hill also have a number of specific projects designed to attract older students whose educational levels are poor. 'Project Start' involves working with a large number of community agencies, concerned with drug abuse or other social problems. It provides extra personal and academic support to adults who may be borderline cases for admission to mainstream courses or who may struggle in college for other reasons. Similarly, colleges will use specialist community development staff whose role is to work with local people in specific projects, including some designed for single parents and other disadvantaged groups.[45]

Bunker Hill argues that vocational reasons are the most important in attracting adults from the minority communities back into education. The prospect of a job, or a better one, is seen as particularly significant in recruiting people whose first language is not English. 'Step Out' is a programme attracting large numbers of minority students which offers one year certificates in a range of vocationally useful subjects, for instance, electronics. The students will take the course alongside an English as a Second Language programme.

The Colleges have been successful in attracting poorly educated adults and young people. Of nearly 1,200 students at Bunker Hill who enroled in the Autumn of 1989, 68.5% had reading levels below the 'twelfth grade', in other words what is formally expected of students at the completion of schooling and what is considered necessary to cope with mainstream courses. 77% of students were similarly deficient in mathematics and 79% in writing. Another 15% of students were required to complete ESL courses before they could be allowed to enrol for other College courses.

In a further study, 30% of new enrolments - all of whom were holders of a high-school or General Educational Diploma - were tested at below sixth grade for reading or the level students should reach at the end of primary education. Only 18.3% of students had the skills in reading, writing and mathematics thought necessary to survive in the mainstream. The College has administered comprehension tests to students entering the day programmes over the last ten years (although these only become compulsory in Autumn 1989). The results suggest that the number of students entering College with 'severe' educational difficulties is growing.

Minority representation has increased significantly since the days of the troubles. Bunker Hill's minority population currently stands at 37%. The economic profile of all students was described as being 'poor working class' with 50% of students receiving some kind of financial aid.

The College recognises that it is difficult, for all its efforts, to attract students from certain groups especially older people with low levels of basic education. The heaviest concentration of students is in the under 21 category. Overall, the average age of College students is 29 (27 for day and 31 for evening

students) but in fact there are as many adult learners (over 22) in the College as students straight from school if day and evening students are added together.[46]

Roxbury similarly attracts a diverse body of students. 59% are women, a large percentage being single parents, and the average student age is 27. College statistics reveal that the average student has 1.5 children.[47] A large number of learners need basic education. The College's assessment procedures show that 33% of incoming students have English as a second language, that 43% of students require help with reading to cope with College courses and 69% of all entrants need substantial remedial tuition in maths and science.[48]

The pattern of recruitment is similar for other community colleges. National research indicates that the increase in students with major difficulties applies throughout the country although it may be levelling off. A 'National Assessment of Educational Progress' study found that only 40% of 17 year olds can read material written for high school students, and that deficiencies are particularly severe in mathematics and science.[49]

Success and failure in developmental education

Almost all colleges and universities offer developmental education entailing, minimally, the provision of basic courses in reading, writing, mathematics and study skills. Many community colleges and universities have established learning centres in response to widening access. These developed in the 1960s and 70s out of college libraries; self-instruction and other facilities were added and in some cases whole new centres were built to provide audio and visual learning laboratories. Other services include peer and professional tutoring, special assistance for those with specific learning disabilities as well as personal, academic and career counselling.[50]

Students' academic levels vary, reflecting the range of people recruited: tuition encompasses basic literacy and numeracy as well as supplementary programmes for those already embarked on a degree. Access is a far broader concept in both provision and students than would normally be the case in the United Kingdom.

Bunker Hill and Roxbury have well established learning centres. They provide diagnostic facilities and multi-media resources for individualised, independent instruction as well as courses in reading, writing, maths and study skills. They are used by students on mainstream courses seeking help or advice over study problems as well as by people specifically placed, as a result of assessment, in developmental education. It is interesting that most colleges have introduced assessment and mandatory placement for all new entrants. This has become a State requirement in Massachusetts; the days of complete open entry, in which students could enrol on whatever course they liked, are long gone. The tests are for initial placement only and not for college admission. Students are required, however, to reach a minimum

standard in English composition, maths and reading before they can progress from developmental education.

These standards are being made far more explicit by the Massachusett's Board of Regents. At present practice varies in that colleges interprit minimum standards differently and students may exit developmental education with varying levels of competence. Under new proposal students will have to reach 'college-level English' and to demonstrate, *inter alia*, the capacity to express 'complex and abstract ideas' in different writing situations and to have achieved some degree of 'fluent, effective expression' before graduating from developmental studies.[51] While such criteria remain open to a variety of interpretations, attempts are nonetheless being made to standardise practice rather more throughout the State.

Developmental staff appear to support the new requirements, considering them preferable to complete freedom of choice. They argue that students registering for degrees when they are barely able to read and write are heading for failure rather than progress. As the President of Bunker Hill put it: *'people were choosing what to do but were not necessarily in a position to do it'*. Now the aim is to acknowledge and accredit the skills people bring with them as well as to define what needs to be done. *'You get the results when you diagnose the problems and give students responsibility for their lives'*.[52]

The majority of entrants in colleges such as these have such poor levels of formal education that they are directed into developmental courses in the first instance. They provide the first experience of college for many adults in inner-city areas. It is important therefore to analyze the different philosophies which underlie the programmes, the methods used and which of these seem to produce the best results. The nature of provision and the values expressed vary, although most developmental educators claim to utilise student-centred methods. In fact I detected four overlapping curriculum types: what I will term the radical, the adult orientated, the technological and the mainstream. I want to describe each of these in turn and to assess the evidence on what works best and why.

The Radical

Roxbury Community College, born of its history, location and ethnic composition, provides a good example of the radical strand in the sense of a curriculum designed to address the fundamental problems faced by minority communities. The College has sought to base its work on two principles: first, multi-culturalism, deriving what is taught from the history and contributions of all cultures, particularly those of non-European Americans; second, student-centredness, grounding what is taught in the needs and struggles of people in the ghetto.

Those needs are great. Schooling has been a dispiriting experience for many people while poverty and unemployment bring a sense of hopelessness to many lives. Various psychological

studies chronicle the impotence and despair learned by people who believe events to be beyond their control. Working class people and the minorities in America express more fatalism and apathy than the population as a whole.[53] Many in communities like Roxbury lack faith in their ability to change either themselves or their situation. Anger and resentment turns inwards producing violence and negativity.

The College believes that a sense of hopelessness represents the biggest barrier to progress for the minority communities. The curriculum, it suggests, must address the factors inhibiting learning and development or else change is impossible. In part this can be done by providing a supportive environment: teachers must get to know their students individually. Small seminar groups meet regularly and provide a context for students and staff to discuss their work, worries and experiences of College.

In part the solution lies in the minorities being encouraged to describe and analyze their own situation and the causes of poverty and alienation. For this reason the College curriculum should reflect the contributions made by writers and thinkers from minority groups. Black writers, the College argues, address themes such as racism, discrimination and the discovery of black consciousness which can help black students understand more about themselves and the roots of their alienation. The focus is shifted from doctrines of individual deficiency and personal responsibility to questions of racism and structural inequality.

Black writers can also serve as role models, illustrating, via their actions, that progress can be achieved without rejecting one's roots or background. The anthropological approach, as the College Principal calls it, requires the transformation of the curriculum to reflect more of the history, thought and literature of non-European Americans.[54]

The Learning Center staff, offering tuition to 77% of Roxbury students, are committed to the 'anthropological' philosophy. Two of the Center staff (there are eight full-time members and 40 part-time tutors and consultants in all) introduced me to the work of a tutor who, for example, had been influenced by Paulo Freire's approach to the teaching of literacy to peasants in North Eastern Brazil.[55] Freire's ideas represent, as the developmental educators see it, the College's aspirations in a particularly coherent form.

Freire believes that education, at whatever level, should be based on dialogue between teachers and learners. Dialogue, in the sense of open communication, is fostered by what he calls a spirit of love, humility, faith and trust. It derives from mutual respect and equality between teacher and learner. If there is no respect for the learner and his/her background, the teacher issues communiques, the opposite of dialogue, inducing silence and withdrawal in students.[56]

Freire's ideas are held to apply to the people of Roxbury as much as to the peasants of North East Brazil. Students belittle

themselves and their capabilities in the same way as the poor in third world societies. Feelings of racial inferiority, emanating from racism in the wider culture, are internalised in much the same way as peasants might internalise the neo-colonialist assumptions of the landowners. Challenging the process involves students working together to explore why they feel as they do. Literacy becomes a means by which students can discover what Freire calls their historicity, that they too have a story to tell and that change is possible in the here and now, via their own actions.

A detailed account of the application of Freire's methods to developmental education has been provided at Roxbury. Groups of adult learners, lacking confidence in their academic abilities, were asked to identify common factors in their experience through sharing critical moments in their lives. Highly personal accounts of painful incidents were used to explore and explain, for example, the causes of racism. Students gradually moved from poor written work to highly analytical forms of writing using evidence obtained from many sources. The work quickly reached a level which enabled the students to progress to mainstream courses.

The students worked co-operatively on particular projects. One project involved them studying AIDS. They had friends suffering from the disease and began with harrowing accounts of the impact of AIDS on those closest to them. They progressed from highly personal, anecdotal and technically limited writing to fluent essays making use of biological, sociological and psychological evidence. Rates of progress were more rapid than for similar students taking more conventional courses. An evaluation report concludes that a number of them were seeing themselves as writers and thinkers for the first time in their lives.[57]

The Adult Orientated

Other developmental educators in other institutions emphasise the adult identity of learners, rather than ethnicity, although they too believe in the importance of teachers respecting and building on student experience. In fact many of their ideas overlap with those of the radicals. Exponents, influenced by adult educators such as Knowles, argue that education should begin from the perspective of the learner rather than the teacher.[58] Emphasis is given to self-direction and autonomy in the learner, reflecting the humanistic psychological basis of much adult education theory in the United States.[59]

Adults, Knowles asserts, want to appreciate the reason for learning before doing it. They require to know how it is relevant to their lives and how it might help them to do something better. They respond to being consulted about the curriculum rather than having matters decided for them in advance since they bring with them experiences which younger learners lack. Hence the importance of techniques which tap into this - such as group discussion, simulation exercises, problem-solving activities, case method and also the greater emphasis on peer-helping activity.

Triton Community College in Chicago illustrates how one group of developmental educators has applied some of these ideas to the curriculum. The College, based in the west of Chicago, serves some 23,000 students. The Adult Basic Education Program (ABE) offers tuition to 6,000 of these.[60]

Most basic education students are recruited from the minority and low income groups. A large number of students have fewer than eight years education, require instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL), are recipients of public assistance and are *'living in poverty'*.[61] Direct recruiting is done by bi-lingual staff in the Latino community and by other staff in co-operation with the Illinois Department of Public Aid. Before developmental education and new forms of outreach activity many locals came nowhere near the College.[62]

The College has integrated its developmental programme with ABE (the latter being transferred from the School of Continuing Education to the English and Math Department which had responsibility for developmental education) to maximise the use of College resources and staff expertise. A 'task force' was established which recommended an adult orientated philosophy for the programme:

> *Adults acquire and retain those skills which they perceive to be practical and important to their lives. Curricular goals and objectives must be consistently related to the concerns and experiences of adults.*[63]

The content of ESL courses should, the task force decided, arise from the students' needs as expressed through discussion and questions rather than be determined in advance. The material generated becomes the prime focus for work on the core skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing.

The task force, echoing Knowles, was adamant that motivation flows from students appreciating the relevance of learning to broader goals. Consequently the College reorganised the curriculum on competency lines believing that students would appreciate a clearer definition of learning outcomes at every stage. These were constructed at five levels of increasing sophistication: at the basic level students would be able, for example, *to 'write in paragraph form based on a model'*; at level five students should write multi-paragraph essays and employ a range of study skills to equip them to cope with other College courses.

It was hoped that students would better understand the point behind a particular task if they could see how it related to the whole programme. Students and instructors should also collaborate in evaluating programmes at every level to see how the system was working. It was believed that adult students would respond positively to an institution which valued their opinions.

The reforms, according to the College, have improved retention and progression rates (although no detailed figures are

available). While the College admits that *'high levels of drop-out in such programs'* are still *'a reality'* it insists that students, as a whole, have benefitted from a more adult-orientated curriculum.[64]

The Technological

This is my third curriculum type. There is a strong belief among many developmental educators that new technology holds the key to improving educational performance, reflecting, perhaps, a characteristic American faith in technology as the solution. Computers and computer literacy are the means to improve educational standards and economic prosperity.[65]

The staff at Bunker Hill perceive new technology to be a 'God send' to many learners. The College has invested heavily in 'multi-media resources for individualised, independent instruction.'[66] Students learn on their own while having access to tutorial and counselling support. The individualised programmes (for which students can earn credit) are supplemented by a number of courses in reading, writing, maths and study skills.

The potential of new technology to meet individual needs is at the core of the College's developmental philosophy. As the mathematics co-ordinator at the Learning Center put it:

> *Oddly enough the computer doesn't frighten people off anymore. They can raise their hands if they are confused, and the tests are adapted to cover students at all levels so they are not pushed in to areas for which they are unprepared. The tests are designed to reveal what people know, at whatever level, not to reveal their ignorance. And students seem to think that if you use a computer you must be a real student.*[67]

The rationale underlying the use of new technology is clear. In a conventional class students follow a syllabus together over a specified period of time. Those who fall behind have to catch up as best they can: work in class will tend to reflect the progress of the majority and those who struggle can easily become demoralised. The Learning Center advisers regard individualised instruction to be essential in providing all learners, particularly in fields such as mathematics, with the time and assistance they need, regardless of starting point or rate of progress. Once the initial outlay on capital equipment has been made computer-assisted learning is also cheaper than employing large numbers of tutors.

Whether such methods deliver the results to the extent claimed is another matter. Research suggests that student progress in computer based programmes may often be slow and that learners can soon become discouraged.[68] There may be little interaction in the laboratory and limited opportunity, therefore, to learn from one another's reasoning and experience:

> *Students work their way through work books, study skills strategies and other materials and activities which tend to isolate them from other students.... Instead of helping students gain new insight into the reading process and confidence in their own abilities through cooperative and supportive endeavours, such approaches often compound their problems, and instructors' well meant attempts at individualisation often result in isolation.*[69]

Student drop-out from Bunker Hill is high. Research into the progress of 212 students showed a one semester retention rate of 67%. Of 212 students entering in the Autumn of 1989, 141 re-enroled for Day credit in the Spring of 1990 but 71 were lost to the system. This is in line with previous College research: in an ad hoc study of 976 English speaking students in the previous autumn, a similar percentage returned for the Spring Semester and a similar percentage to the above was lost. Those with the lowest reading levels tend to drop out in greater numbers than those with the highest. The College has only limited data on subsequent retention rates for the 1987 cohort but this shows that 59.1% had dropped out after two semesters.[70]

Such attrition levels result from many factors and Colleges such as Roxbury and Triton with different emphases suffer high drop-out too. Nonetheless, the evidence from these institutions indicates that something more than individualised programming is required if students are to progress. Co-operation and participation in the classroom appear to be important prerequisites of student success.

The Mainstream

It is paradoxical, therefore, that the fourth strand reflects the increasing influence of the competitive ethic in American education. The progressive agenda of student-centred learning, with its stress on co-operation between learners, has become overshadowed in recent times by a reassertion of faith in competition and traditional forms of instruction as the best guarantors of standards. New right politicians declare that the education system has failed to educate the population and there is a widespread conviction, supported by considerable evidence, that illiteracy is growing. The fault according to neo-conservatives lies with 60s-style progressive methods of whatever kind.[71]

The 'new right' declarations have gone hand in hand with an associated campaign to reduce public expenditure and make institutions more accountable.[72] Higher education like schools must, in the language of neo-conservatism, become more efficient and cost-effective. These pressures have fed on anxiety over performance within the developmental community itself. The Report to the Board of Regents in Massachusetts is critical of the fact

that in many developmental schemes *'no system exists for ensuring that admitted students with deficiencies in preparation receive necessary instruction or that such instruction actually improves student performance'*. The Report notes that student drop-out from many institutions is unacceptably high.

Demands for greater accountability help to explain the increased importance attached to standardised forms of assessment within developmental schemes. The solution to poor performance is seen to rest with regular testing enabling students to compare each other's performance while at the same time resource allocators and politicians can compare institutions. Of course a belief in norm-referenced testing is deeply embedded in the American educational psyche. Knowles among others has described how competition for grades is seen by most teachers to be the best motivator of performance. Grades must be on a curve of normal distribution - there are only so many As available and there must be those who fail - that is in the natural order of things.[73]

The emphasis given to testing concerns many of the more radical or adult-orientated practitioners. In their view instructors spend large amounts of time preparing students to take tests, administering them and helping learners recover from them. Those who do badly are reminded of their inadequacies relative to others. The process serves to discourage them by reinforcing feelings of failure and personal deficiency rather than motivating them to work harder.

It is important to add that many conventional forms of testing appear to discriminate against older learners. Research indicates that memory declines with age and the anxiety provoked by forms of assessment which place a premium on speed of recall rather than depth of understanding or the ability to place what has been learned in a wider context, can put mature students at a disadvantage.[74]

It was interesting in the light of the new right's critique of progressive methods that the majority of all courses studied had a traditional, teacher-centred ethos, an impression reinforced in interviews and questionnaire returns.[75] There was little indication in curriculum planning and delivery of the use of interactive techniques to enhance language skills or of any involvement of students in deciding what and how to study. Of course my findings could well be biased and unrepresentative of the broader picture but I did consult widely and the observations are derived from extensive discussions within NADE. More extensive research in this area would, however, be appropriate.

It may be significant that many developmental educators are recruited from remedial education in schools and might be unfamiliar with the methodology and ethos of adult education. Their experience and training relate to children and young people rather than adults and the methods used are correspondingly didactic and unnegotiated.[76] Furthermore, the pressures on them from large numbers of poorly educated youngsters in the system, as well as declining resources, probably militates against any

focus on the minority of older learners or too much experiment. I should emphasise that in most centres adults are in the minority and staff time can easily be monopolised by disenchanted youngsters who lack the motivation to succeed.

Difficulties can be compounded by poor staff/student ratios which means there may be little space for teachers and academic advisers to focus on anything other than immediate and majority concerns. The culture of some programmes appears correspondingly to be closer to that of a British college of further education than an adult tutorial group.[77]

Some accounts of curriculum innovation serve, ironically, to underline the traditional ethos of many schemes. Young and old, one developmental educator has argued, come to learning *'from authoritarian environments in which they have learned to rely heavily on teachers' judgements about the appropriateness or 'correctness' of their academic endeavors.'*[78] The Co-ordinator of Reading and Study Skills at East Tenessee State University, sees the purpose of developmental studies to be to challenge authoritarianism and to encourage greater independence and self-judgement in students. She has devised a variety of self-assessment questionnaires to enhance the process. The questionnaires have been designed with three objectives in mind. First, to enable students to assess their progress in relation to course objectives; second, so that students can monitor their course grades and attendance patterns (practically important since credits often depend on satisfactory attendance); and third, to encourage them to evaluate the quality of their assignments before handing them back to instructors.

What her account illustrates, however, is that students played no part in devising the scheme or in designing the questionnaires. Their participation could have prompted wider discussion on assessment and the methods most likely to instil qualities such as independence, self-awareness or enthusiasm for learning. There is evidence, for example, that students in those institutions which, however unintentionally, create the impression that all that matters is the grade point score, develop above average levels of cynicism towards their studies. Students complain that education is reduced to feeding back to teachers what they want to hear. As a result people wonder whether they really learn anything at all.[79]

The analysis, so far, suggests that the application of more student-centred methods improves student retention. While there is a need for wider research most studies appear to support this conclusion. A recent, comprehensive review of current research confirms the impression that interactive, participatory approaches improve retention rates:

> *teaching techniques and settings that provide for maximum student interaction ...also lead to a level of student involvement that encourages retention. Although there are a myriad of programs and*

> *teaching situations, those programs and instructional techniques that involve students, allow for frequent faculty-student contact, and encourage students to learn from each other, meet with most success.*[80]

A separate study reached a similar conclusion: successful programmes are those in which teachers assist students to give birth to their own ideas, enabling them to make their own knowledge tacit and explicit, rather than filling their heads with a mass of secondary material. The evidence indicates that learning is enhanced across a variety of schemes and projects when teachers employ problem-posing methods and encourage dialogue and cooperation.[81]

It is somewhat ironic therefore that radical and progressive methods are under sustained attack. Although the assault is primarily targeted at the schools, it reaches other parts of the system too. Educators, even those working with older learners and committed to non-traditional forms of teaching, feel obliged to listen and take note. Earlier optimism about access being the harbinger of a curriculum revolution has evaporated in the harsh reaction of the last decade.

CHAPTER 4, PROGRESSION AND THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGES

A central objective of the civil rights and access campaigns had been to open the universities to more adults and young people from the minority communities. Community colleges were given the twin task of providing the first step on the ladder for students from under-represented groups and of increasing opportunities for them to transfer to university.

I have described how structural constraints, particularly the limited capacity of the economy to generate opportunities at the higher levels relative to potential demand, could conflict with popular aspirations. The junior college was located, as Brint and Karabel put it, *'at the very point where the aspirations generated by American democracy clashed head on with the realities of its class structure'*.[82]

How is this conflict between individual aspiration and social reality manifested in the lives of students and in the management of colleges like Roxbury and Bunker Hill? Of course, note has been made of the fact that large numbers of people fail to progress beyond the initial stage. It could be argued that high rates of attrition are a means by which the system solves at least part of the contradiction between potential demand and available opportunity: the more students withdraw at an early stage the less the pressure to extend opportunities at subsequent levels.

Unfortunately for research purposes, community colleges in Massachusetts have failed to distinguish developmental students as a separate category for data collection purposes. There is therefore no specific data which can be used to measure precise movement from the bottom of the system to the top. Gathering data of this kind only became a State requirement in the 1990/91 academic year and this material is not yet available. Similarly, there is no general State-wide information on movement between liberal arts and vocational programmes. This is an important indicator of progression since completion of a proportion of liberal arts credits is a requirement for associate degrees (equivalent to the first two years of a bachelors degree) and subsequent transfer to a four year school.

Notwithstanding, there is evidence from particular institutions about what happens to students beyond developmental studies. Most students opt for vocational courses rather than the liberal arts. This is highly significant because credits for vocational courses may not count for transfer purposes and those who might subsequently decide that they wish to consider university may be required to begin their studies afresh. It seems that those responsible for university admissions consider most vocational programmes without a significant proportion of liberal/academic subjects to be an unsuitable preparation for entry into the third year of a degree course.[83]

Despite the absence of specific data on developmental students, Bunker Hill College was able to provide general information on

the post-College destinations of all its students. For the past 14 years, the Office of Career Services and Co-operative Education has conducted a follow-up survey of the careers of all BHCC graduates. 475 graduates were awarded degrees by BHCC in 1987-88. Of these:

> *380 (80%) were career programme graduates, indicating the preponderance of highly vocational courses.*
>
> *95 (20%) were liberal arts graduates.*

Of the 273 who responded to the survey:

> *207 (75%) were in employment, of whom 146 (53%) were employed in jobs directly related to subjects studied in College.*
>
> *29 (11%) were unemployed and seeking employment.*
>
> *102 (37%) indicated that they were continuing their education.*
>
> *38 (78%) of the liberal arts graduates were continuing their education.*

As can be seen, only a minority of people continue in education of any kind after College. I asked the College how many students specifically transfer to university and it admitted that the number was small. Significantly, the proportion of students continuing in education, including those transferring to university, has declined in the last decade. In 1980, 48% of graduates continued while by 1988 the figure declined to 37%.

The figures are consistent with national and State-wide trends: fewer students in general are transferring from the colleges to universities (the national figure indicates that some 15-20% of community college graduates transfer to university). Data from the University of Massachusetts show that community college transfers stabilised at between 450-500 in the 1980s, half as many as between 1972 and 1974.[84] Put simply, movement from the bottom to the top of higher education has diminished rather than increased in the last two decades.

There is a view that the decline is being reversed. It is argued that two year vocational courses are beginning to feed students into the senior institutions as the latter undergo their own form of vocationalism. Students, it is suggested, are discovering that many of the credits they earn from two year occupational programmes are acceptable for transfer purposes: *'a view of the community college as terminal institutions and of the universities as institutions for students interested in the liberal arts is woefully inadequate.'*[85]

There is little evidence of such a trend in Massachusetts. The data, if anything, point to an opposite conclusion: that the continued growth in short-term vocational courses coincides with

the decline in the numbers transferring to university. There is no indication, as yet, of any reversal of the pattern. Vocational programmes do not provide the option of subsequent transfer and universities continue to insist that students concentrate on the liberal arts if they want to be considered for entry into the third year of study.[86]

The colleges are sensitive to the charge that the majority of learners choose vocational courses which close rather than open educational doors. While conceding that career programmes do not constitute a route to university, they argue that the courses nevertheless meet the wants and needs of the academically less able.

The decline in transfers is, in fact, justified on two grounds: first, it is argued that not everyone can benefit from university study. This suggestion may be reasonable but has, of course, to address the question of why so many 'less able' adults and young people belong to low-income and minority groups. There is no evidence that intelligence or ability can be correlated with class or ethnicity.

The second defence is that the colleges are responding to student demand, that students increasingly choose short vocational courses because they have no desire to transfer to university. The institutions insist that they are not responsible if those at the bottom chose vocational courses or if their aspirations have narrowed. Reference is made to research indicating a move away from the degree as an educational goal for many parents and students. They want more 'relevant' courses to improve career prospects in the shortest possible time.[87]

Middlesex Community College (which serves the Northwest region outside Boston) insists that short-term vocational education is what the consumer wants.[88] It provides an extensive programme of vocational training to meet the rise in demand working closely with bodies such as the Bay States Skills Corporation; this quasi-public body, created to boost training in the area, provides grants to train workers to specifications laid down by employers. In return employers are required to provide matching grants by way of equipment, instructors, materials, and/or curricular advice. The College insists that students want more, not fewer, such opportunities.

Roxbury College is more ambivalent. According to some observers it has kept faith with the transfer cause more than many other institutions. It tries to encourage students to consider the transfer option. Furthermore, there is evidence from within the College that many students would like to progress to university but question its viability, financially as well as educationally. They worry about paying for university, compounding highly personal and cultural anxieties about the appropriateness of university for people like them.[89] Despite the College's efforts only a small number choose this route.

I should add that many Roxbury staff welcome the growth of career

programmes in the sense that they can widen career options for local people. There is no shame in training people to obtain better jobs than they might otherwise have got. The prospect of employment or of career advancement is, after all, they insist, an important factor in motivating people to participate in education in the first place.[90] The problem remains that such courses forestall the possibility of transfer to university and that this raises a curriculum and equal opportunities issue of the greatest importance. It should be added that many students entering the short courses fail to obtain the jobs they train for, despite claims to the contrary.[91] It seems that some lose in more ways than one.

There is also evidence of considerable anxiety in communities such as Roxbury about the expansion of short-term courses and the decline in transfers. Many local people ask whether vocational programmes offer an inferior education. I was told of a proposal to launch a six week nursing programme at a time of chronic shortage of nurses. Unfortunately the course failed to offer a professional qualification and many local people were opposed to it on the grounds that minority students were being treated as second best. Local community leaders wanted the same opportunities for professional training, certification and university education that they believe to be available to whites.[92]

Moreover, there is criticism from within the College that the education on offer, for example in training secretaries or construction workers, is too narrow and illiberal, despite anthropological/student centred rhetoric. Programmes may be dominated by the acquisition of specific work-related skills to the neglect of a broader education.[93] Such criticisms echo the findings of a national report into education for the minority communities which has concluded that there is a need for more courses to help black and Hispanic students develop the intellectual skills for university. The Report argues that responsiveness to the labour market, and what employers want, should not be at the expense of a broad curriculum.[94]

The suggestion that the decline in transfers is primarily a product of consumer-choice has also been challenged in a major study of Massachusetts' community colleges. Among other techniques, researchers interviewed 30 students in-depth at two community colleges, Bunker Hill and Massasoit. The interviews indicate a major reason that adults and young people opt for the career, as against the more academic track, is uncertainty about the ability to cope with academic study rather than from considered choice. Students might want a degree but worry about whether they can manage the work involved and its increasing cost.[95]

The researchers proceeded to explore other explanations for the shift in emphasis towards vocational courses. They examined the idea of 'the structural power of business' to shape the curriculum via control of the job markets, what has been termed the business domination model of the college curriculum.

The researchers rejected this hypothesis as well. They were not suggesting that business is uninfluential - heads of colleges may largely take on board what business says it wants and the economy is thought to require, particularly when there is money available to undertake such work. Rather it was felt that such a theory presented too simplistic an account of the growth of short-term courses.

They found that the drive towards expanding short-term programmes came primarily from college administrators acting, as they saw it, to protect their institutions in difficult times. Administrators courted local business leaders and tried to persuade them to use the colleges. They were anxious that many students might have little by way of certification or achievement to show for their time and that this might reflect badly on the institutions concerned. Basically colleges were insecure about role and status at a time of reductions in public expenditure and competition for students. Career programmes offered a potential salvation for hard pressed institutions.

This coincided with moves by the State to provide greater financial incentive to colleges willing to expand courses in, for example, electronics and information technology. Money was provided for new appointments in specific fields as Massachusetts sought to stimulate inward investment by dangling the prospect of a highly trained workforce in front of prospective employers. New or expanded programmes developed in everything from the *'down-to-earth, blue collar world of construction and building to the Buck Roger's world of laser electronics and diagnostic medical sonography.'*[96]

Moreover, specific Federal grants were made available to support such courses. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 and its subsequent amendments offered generous support to vocational education of 'less than college grade', meaning below associate degree level. Cuts in general public subvention meant that colleges came increasingly to rely on grants tied to specific vocational projects.[97]

Such incentives were decisive in shifting the emphasis in student recruitment; in the case of Bunker Hill 70% of students were in career programmes by 1978.[98] Ironically Bunker Hill set a quota of 25% on total enrolments for liberal arts credits. (Other institutions acted similarly but Bunker Hill introduced the highest and most rigid quota of all). The College defended its actions on the grounds that students could take liberal arts courses elsewhere in the City if they so wanted.[99]

There is a further dimension to this. The 70s and 80s brought recession and employers wanted fewer graduates. Changed times were reflected in the mass media via images of under-employed and unemployed graduates. The prospect of entering university, and the mobility which this had traditionally implied, was presented in a less favourable light.[100] At the same time student grants became scarce as a result of Federal Government policy and many students were forced to consider loans. This acted to deter many

adults and young people from low-income groups.[101] In desperate cases most colleges have some bursaries available to cover tuition and other costs but these are in increasingly short supply.

No doubt such factors combine to deter many people from 'choosing' university. They are uncertain enough about themselves and their suitability for academic study in the first place and financial worries may tip the balance entirely. Recession hits the dreams as well as the pockets of those on the margins.

Nonetheless, recession and government policy should not obscure the colleges' own role in shifting the emphasis of community college activity and patterns of enrolment. Senior administrators decided the future lay in vocational programmes and students had correspondingly to be persuaded to enrol for them. It may be true that many poorer people were easily persuaded and flocked to the new courses but this was more a consequence of economic insecurity than meaningful choice. In any case, colleges in the main did little to dissuade them. Consumer-choice rhetoric masks a major retreat from the equal opportunities agenda in American higher education.

CHAPTER 5, THE UNIVERSITIES

The evidence so far therefore is that the campaign for a more student-centred, 'relevant' curriculum and enhanced opportunities to transfer from local colleges to universities has been diverted. There have been other priorities as the new right seized the political and educational initiative, as colleges turned to short vocational courses for security and kudos and recession deepened. What then of access to university for adults from working class and minority communities? To what extent have they, and adults more generally, been a force for pedagogic and wider change?

The three institutions I studied provide different vantage points from which to answer these questions. The University of Massachusetts is part of the public system of higher education in the State. It states a commitment to the widest possible access and is the most popular transfer institution for community college students in Massachusetts.[102] The University's College of Public and Community Service has a specific remit to recruit adults from the inner-city and minority communities. The aim of the College is to accredit students' informal learning and to utilise participant experience and vocational interests as the basis for study. The College of Arts and Sciences, also part of the University of Massachusetts, is similarly pledged to broaden access and to offer preparatory and academic support programmes to assist students in their learning.

Continuing education departments in American universities claim a distinct role in enabling access to the four year institutions. The National University Continuing Education Association (NUCEA) argues that while departments may interpret their missions differently there is widespread commitment to making universities more accessible to adults from under-privileged groups and to offering programmes of study appropriate to their needs.[103]

I wanted to examine how far such commitment extended to continuing education within an institution generally considered to be at the apex of the system. Brunetta Reid Wolfman, the President of Roxbury, tells a story about the 350th anniversary celebrations of the foundation of Boston Latin School in 1988. A grand procession was organised including all higher education institutions in the State: Harvard came first and Roxbury last. The order, she thought, accurately symbolised the status hierarchy within American higher education.[104]

Harvard's students have traditionally been drawn from a narrow social base. The cost of study alone debars all but the most affluent from contemplating entry. Although there are a number of bursaries to cover tuition costs for minority students, they are in limited supply. Consequently I wondered if the Division of Continuing Education, via part-time degree programmes, offered compensatory opportunities for adult students from under-represented groups. Or to put it differently, whether a unit on the margins has sought to challenge the parent body on access or tends rather to mirror its elitist values?

The three institutions present contrasting perspectives on access to higher education for adults living in inner-city communities. They provide an indication of the commitment of American universities, and continuing education, to working class and minority adults. There is no claim that they are representative: institutions are simply too diverse for that. However, as with the community colleges, I have tried to locate the evidence from the studies in a broader context.

Harvard

The struggle for wider access barely touched Harvard and the elite institutions at all. The demand for places led to new colleges and changes in admissions criteria in public institutions but little reform at the top. Reformers did not demand integration at all levels of the academic system, aware perhaps of the resistance such moves would meet. In some institutions, such as the University of California at Berkeley, new 'open enrolment' campuses were established while the top level colleges, such as Queens and Hunter, continued much as before.[105] Democratisation of higher education as a whole was never really on the political and educational agenda.

The Division of Continuing Education at Harvard sits on the margins of an Ivy League, private university. It is responsible for three main extramural activities - University Extension, an Institute For Learning in Retirement and a Summer School Program. The Division sees itself as the means by which the University *'serves the community through quality continuing education'*.[106] I wanted to examine which communities and what service this actually meant.

University Extension began at Harvard in 1910, at the same time as tutorial classes in England. The University President of the time described extension as an experiment in *'popular education'* for the many people in the community who had not been to college but *'who had the desire and the aptitude to profit by so much of a college education as, amid the work of earning their living, they are able to obtain'*. Unlike the extramural tradition in England, Harvard offered certificated learning including a new degree (originally a four year Associate in Arts, now a Bachelor of Liberal Arts) *'which will require no entrance examination, and no college residence, but of which the requirements will be substantially equivalent to the Bachelor's degree'*.[107]

The Extension School has grown considerably from these origins. It currently provides 640 courses for 13,799 students. Of 22,246 course registrations in the 1988/89 academic year, 4,507 (20%) were for non-credit and 6,584 (30%) for graduate credit courses. An analysis of the social background of participants reveals an unrepresentative student population. 77% of participants possess a bachelor's degree, 17% a master's degree and 5% a doctorate. The Institute for Learning in Retirement enrols large numbers of graduate students - 85% of its membership have first degrees, many from Harvard itself. Students travel substantial distances to attend course but the peoples of inner-city Boston appear to

be largely absent.[108]

The Division of Continuing Education sees the educational level of students at entry to be a strength rather than a weakness. The Annual Report describes students as 'experienced, motivated and educated' and more likely to succeed in their studies.[109] There is no institutional commitment to affirmative action, broadening the student base or other access values.

The values which predominate are revealed in a study of senior University faculty who teach extramural programmes.[110] The study was in response to a concern that academic standards in the Division were unsatisfactory. Thirty six 'respected and experienced' members of faculty were asked to rate extension students against conventional undergraduates and to judge the academic quality of the extension programme.

Two-fifths of continuing education students were considered by faculty to be *'as able but more than half were less so'*. The chief reason cited was the *'wider spectrum'* of students and their *'greater variability'*. But half the faculty considered extension students to be better motivated than conventional undergraduates and the other half thought them equally motivated. 61% of faculty felt that extension students were as well or even better prepared for a college education than regular Harvard students.

The majority (62%) reported similar levels of academic attainment by extension students but some faculty (38%) reported lower grades. Seven out of ten faculty said they applied the same rigorous marking to extension students as other honours degree candidates while 83% felt they employed the same criteria in failing the Division's students as they did those in the mainstream.

85% of faculty regarded extension teaching to be as rewarding as intramural work but two-thirds felt they covered less material. Faculty thought the high drop-out rate (30%) in extension to be the result of natural selection *'whereby the less motivated and less able students drop out during the course of the semester'*.

The Division found the study *'reassuring and favorable'*. It proved that extension students were as well prepared and able as conventional undergraduates. The Division was clearly anxious to defend its academic standing and to demonstrate that *'grading standards were maintained and...the experience of teaching adult students was gratifying'*. The Division acknowledged that 'extension' was often thought to be second rate, the *'Avis rather than the Hertz'* of higher education. It believed the study discredited this notion and demonstrated that adult students on part-time courses were as academically able as conventional recruits.

Such arguments are familiar to continuing educators in the British university system. Adult educators here too are obliged to defend the 'academic quality' of part-time students and degree courses against internal criticism. What is missing from the

defence of continuing education at Harvard, however, is any critique of the concept of quality being used by the parent body. In effect high quality becomes a synonym for students' educational levels at entry rather than the distance travelled once inside. It can be argued that those adults who progress from being academically unconfident to a degree may indicate far more about the quality of an institution than the grades of conventional well-schooled students.

The Division's failure to address such issues may reflect, perhaps inevitably, the dominance of the wider institutional culture. Although limited moves have been made to help students become more effective learners and individual conferences are available for those experiencing difficulties this is on a small scale and stemmed more from student pressure than institutional initiative. The main assumption seems to be that those who enter should be able to survive and prosper in the system largely unaided.

Revealingly, the Dean of the Division, Michael Shinegal, seeks to compare Harvard Extension with extramural departments in some 'elite institutions' in the United Kingdom rather than public universities and colleges in Massachusetts:

> *Ask them (ie Oxford and other elite institutions) what they are doing for their own people; most of what is offered is non-credit and this is all about keeping those things that are of the greatest value, for example, degree work, in the scarcest supply...there are some basic attitudinal problems you have to deal with first...those with power do not wish to empower those without.*[111]

A better comparison, given the Division's community service mission, might be many American public universities. Harvard Extension, unlike for example the University of Massachusetts, has developed no access strategy or specific contact with the peoples of the inner-city. No opportunities have been created for adults to transfer from local colleges into part-time programmes or bursaries provided to support them in their studies. Correspondingly, adults at Harvard tend to represent the country's first rather than its third world.

How typical is this of continuing education departments in other American universities? Harvard is after all at the apex of the system and therefore likely to be uncharacteristic of universities or continuing education as a whole. The evidence[112] reveals, however, that Harvard may not be quite the exception that might at first be supposed. Roughly three quarters of students in continuing higher education nationwide have professional or managerial occupations; educationally almost half have been to college and over a quarter are college graduates (although the proportion is lower in programmes specifically designed for adults who never finished a degree, such as at Boston College).

Students' income is also well above the national average while blacks, Hispanics and native Americans are heavily under-represented, although it should be mentioned that such aggregates disguise large variations between different institutions. There are examples of particular departments making breakthroughs with particular groups, such as the University of Miami with Cubans and the University of Oklahoma with native Americans.[113]

Nonetheless, continuing education has not, on the whole, been in the vanguard of the access and equal opportunities movement. While Harvard may be an extreme example the evidence suggests that continuing higher education more generally tends to reinforce the maldistribution of educational opportunity in the population as a whole rather than fundamentally challenging it. Despite NUCEA's claims, most departments cater for well-educated, high income suburbanites rather than the peoples and problems of the inner-city.

The College of Public and Community Service

The College of Public and Community Service is set in downtown Boston, close to areas of urban deprivation. It embodies a radical strand in university education in America for two main reasons. First, the College seeks to attract workers into the University from all levels of public service, including large numbers of poorly educated people employed in difficult, demanding inner-city occupations. Second, it uses experiential and competency-based methods which it considers more appropriate to adult learners.

The origins of experiential and competency-based learning lie in the 60's conviction that higher education should be more relevant to people living and working in the inner-city, especially to the ethnic minorities. I have described how the traditional curriculum was under seige on the grounds of its irrelevance to, and dismissal of, the struggles and experiences of the have-nots.[114] Contemporaneously, due to the success of the Civil Rights movement, many people were hired for posts because of their race and street skills but laboured under the burden of inadequate schooling. The College was founded to meet the needs of such people.[115]

There was intense debate within the University between two main factions about how this should be done: the first wanting the College, indeed the entire University, to become 'a Harvard for the poor' and provide the very best liberal higher education opportunities for the minority and working class communities of Boston. The second, more radical group, fought for the College to adopt a more distinct and 'relevant' mission.[116]

The radicals had two aims. First, to offer people working in public and community service recognition and accreditation for the vocational and personal skills they already possessed, something that higher education more generally failed to do. Second, to design education programmes which addressed the issues of inner-city life through the application of academic knowledge

and procedures to a systematic analysis of the needs of adults living and working in difficult urban environments.[117]

The radicals won the day. It was agreed that the new College would target workers in public and community service, particularly those involved with the casualties of the inner-city in drug treatment centres, shelters for battered women or other public and voluntary services. Academics, employers and employees would together identify the expertise needed for particular occupations; faculty and students would in turn explore how far students had acquired such expertise as well as negotiate programmes of learning to enhance academic and vocational capabilities.

The College recognised that their scheme required the co-operation of the strong public sector unions in the State not the least because students needed study leave to attend College. The unions were eventually persuaded and one union, making use of the collective bargaining process, went so far as to negotiate an agreement with the State to meet its members' entire tuition costs.[118]

From its inception, the College sought to base teaching on sound adult learning principles. The research of adult educators such as Tough was influential particularly in showing how adults can learn in highly systematic ways independently of the formal education system.[119]

> *It should be one of the principles of adult education that we should look at the things that people bring with them into education - their experience is worth credentialing.*[120]

The College began from the premise that while workers might have limited formal education they would nonetheless have acquired a multiplicity of skills in other ways. Women without formal qualifications, for example, may have run a home, raised a family as well as managed paid employment. Normally such experiences, and the learning acquired in relation to them, would be undervalued by or considered irrelevant to higher education.

The solution was to apportion equal weight to applied skills and occupational performance, as to conventional academic attainments, at every level of the curriculum and assessment procedure. The broader curriculum would assist in establishing a more egalitarian culture in which achievements of many different kinds were recognised. Adults were not empty vessels to be filled by academics but people with substantial if unacknowledged skills and knowledge.

The argument is that the accreditation of work or home based learning makes more sense in an institution that regards the ability to apply ideas to practical problems, or the capacity to relate to and work effectively with others, as being of equal importance in learning as more conventional academic attainments. Furthermore, the College believes that critical thinking and

conceptual awareness, two core academic skills, are positively enhanced through the dialectic of theory acting on practice and vice versa. When formal learning is remote from the experience of the learner it becomes something to be endured for extrinsic rather than intrinsic reward. The benefit both to students and educational institutions alike may be familiar to those who have taught adult learners in a highly experiential way.

The intention is that the assessment process should give time and space to examine experience in depth at the beginning of and during College careers. The point is to recapture a variety of situations and identify what may have been learned which is then integrated in a more formal statement related to various academic and applied competencies at every level of the curriculum. The process of accrediting experiential learning is possible because academics have specified the outcomes for each programme: if the student can demonstrate a competency, regardless of where, when or how this was acquired, they will obtain credit for it.

Students therefore obtain credits for experiential learning as part of the degree programme itself. The assessment of experiential and work based learning is an intrinsic element of the degree rather than a mechanism simply for admissions or credit exemption purposes as is normally the case with APL and APEL in this country.[121]

Assessment of prior and experiential learning begins on first entry and lasts initially for a semester. The time is also used

> *to help the student design their learning program, to teach the student how to use the competency system, to develop a plan to maximise the assistance the institution can give the student and to encourage self-evaluation - to gain confidence and self-respect.*[122]

As part of the assessment procedure, the College utilises various tests to establish levels of literacy and numeracy. Many students, as in the community colleges, have such poor basic skills that extensive bridging course are required before they can contemplate academic study.[123]

Students are encouraged to consider the styles of learning most appropriate to them. They are asked if they want to work independently or as part of a small group. Many students prefer the latter since a group can provide support and the possibility of collaboration on projects. Methods of assessment can also be negotiated; for some applied competencies, such as in social work, assessment could be peer group based taking the form of a student being observed at work or in a simulated interview with other students playing the role of clients.

There is no grading system as such, students either do or do not reach a minimum level of competence. After completing each unit of study, they receive a transcript of achievement which details their strong and weaker points. The transcript includes lengthy

written comment from faculty and others involved in the assessment procedure. Employers can judge for themselves the extent to which students have developed a particular skill, attribute or body of knowledge beyond the minimum.[124] Senior faculty claim that *'the College has removed the stigma of grades'*. If a student fails a particular competency, their programme of study will be re-evaluated and, if necessary, a new one agreed. Supplementary tuition may also be provided.[125]

The Dean of the College, Jema Dari, describes the process as one of mutual respect between teacher and student. The College says to students, *'your life experience has meaning and a value and should be taken on board in the academic process....We value what you are bringing into the classroom just as we have knowledge and skills that are going to help you achieve'*.[126]

The College has succeeded in bringing new constituencies into university education. There are currently over 1,000 students mostly drawn from metropolitan Boston with an average age of 39. 80% are women, 30% are from the minority communities and most lack formal educational qualifications. Students' occupations range from gas pump attendants to middle management in hospitals and government. The institution claims to have become a major staff development agency for public sector workers at every level.[127]

The drive to attract new groups of students continues. The College has devised a model programme to improve 'low-grade' workers' literacy skills to enable more of them to enter higher education. The intention is to assist public sector bodies, such as hospitals, to recruit managers and administrators from among unskilled and semi-skilled workers. It aims to overcome what the College calls the three main barriers to learning: inadequate basic skills; the lack of any sense of entitlement to higher education; and low levels of confidence. The belief is that all these can be remedied through intensive, small group tuition and personal counselling.[128]

Notwithstanding, there are many anxieties about aspects of the College's work and performance. While large numbers begin their studies with poor basic education and progress to a degree, others struggle and drop out. This has led the College to establish a developmental programme to try to meet students' needs more adequately. The College accepts that many students simply enroled for mainstream credits and floundered: there has been a retreat here too from the doctrine of open entry. The new developmental programme accredits competencies in maths, reading and writing similar to the procedures at Triton College. The acquisition of these competencies is now a prerequisite of degree-level study; the standards are roughly equivalent to those of a high school or General Education Diploma.[129]

There is a wider concern about academic standards. Some students, despite novel forms of teaching, struggle to produce written work at university level. There is unease over differing academic standards and expectations between various courses which, in

theory, are at the same level and carry equivalent credit rating. Some faculty insist on higher standards of written work than others and the quality of essays and projects can correspondingly vary. There is evidence that students choose those credits with a reputation for being academically undemanding which, as the College concedes, raises doubt about the overall value of the degree.

As a result the College will in future insist on minimum academic standards across the entire programme. Students who are unable to produce satisfactory written assignments can still be accredited for other achievements. There is a growing consensus that wider access, and the applied curriculum, should not be at the price of neglecting more conventional academic criteria.

Such evidence raises important questions about access to universities for adults who are poorly educated in a formal sense. Despite the attention given to institutional culture and the theory and practice of adult learning, many students continue to withdraw or make little real progress. (There is a need for a more rigorous study to explore how theory accords with practice particularly in relation to student experience of APEL, APL, and competency-based learning).[130]

Of course, withdrawal is often for non-academic reasons: adults, as in this country, have other pressing demands on their time. Rates of attrition can partly be ascribed to the reality and constraints of adult life, including, for some, the cost of study.

It can be argued that recognition given to experiential learning and to practical skills mitigates some of the worst effects of academic disappointment. It is no longer the case, in this system, of all or nothing and those who struggle to cope academically will have credits to show for their time at College. Nonetheless some students feel failure because they continue to place greatest value on conventional academic achievements despite the efforts of the College. They reflect the conventional values of the wider system and believe that some credits are and should be more equal than others. In this sense, there is a price to be paid as well as benefits from a more open and radical institution.

The College of Arts and Sciences

The College of Arts and Sciences also seeks to recruit students from under-represented groups and to help them succeed in university. The College has established developmental and other academic support programmes to prepare such learners for degree-level study and to assist them in the initial stages of the process.

Great effort goes into student recruitment. Contact is made with community agencies and groups are approached with special forms of publicity. Visits are organised on a regular basis and a special campaign has been mounted to recruit older learners

through special one day conferences. Graduates and current students from the minority communities are employed in outreach to share their experience of university in the hope of convincing others of its merits.

The Developmental Studies Program (DSP) is regarded as a central plank in the College's access strategy. It is designed, as the Prospectus puts it, for persons *'who have been disenfranchised from access to higher education, live in the inner-city, have less educational and financial advantage, have been out of school for many years or have non-traditional educational experiences, are minority candidates or have English as a Second Language'.*

Of the 245 students who passed the DSP in 1988, 58% were minority students, made up of 25% Asians, 9% Hispanics and 19% blacks. As with older people, the College is working to recruit larger numbers of students from the minority communities who are under-represented in the University as a whole.[131]

Admission to the DSP is not open to everyone. The system is selective unlike developmental courses in the community colleges. Selection is designed to *'assure the success of the applicants'* by choosing students who are *'motivated to attend a university'*. Applicants have to demonstrate a potential to benefit from study. They are asked to apply for admission to the College which acts as a filtering mechanism: applicants have to submit credentials and other records from school, a letter of recommendation from an 'appropriate' person in the community as well as samples of their own writing. While older students are not required to provide high school records they too have to offer evidence of relevant achievement.

In fact, given the system of selection, DSP students are closer in kind to Access students in this country than those in the community colleges. They are relatively near to reaching required standards of writing, reading and maths (the levels are equivalent to standard College entrance prerequisites). Interestingly most students successfully complete the developmental stage and progress to degree programmes. Of 252 students entering the DSP in 1988, (made up of 164 DSP and 88 DSP/ESL), 245 finished the course and reached the defined standards. Many students subsequently enrol on a preparatory programme which offers continuing support in the first phase of their degree studies.

The preparatory programme, or 'Access' as it is called, ('Advising, Counselling, and Co-ordination of Educational Support Services') is funded by the Federal Government and is available to students during the Freshman Year. However, the staff at the Learning Center, which runs Access as well as the DSP, insist that the amount of support available to individuals is limited: there are only six advisers per thousand students.

Cynthia Durost, Director of the DSP, described Access, and developmental education more generally, as 'demanding'. Students, she argued, are preparing for university study and *'there is no*

watering down of the curriculum to make it less demanding'. She admitted to anxiety about being under-resourced and the implications of this for students and the success of the programmes. She felt there was considerable opposition to the Center among some faculty who question whether the university ought be involved in such work at all. Her concern was echoed by other advisory staff. As Durost put it, *'the extent to which the University is committed to its mission or the extent to which it transcends rhetoric is limited'*.

There is in fact a long standing debate about developmental education within the institution. The developmental educators, no doubt sensitive to criticism, are concerned about high rates of attrition in the College[132] and the way these are used to criticise the access strategy in general and the role of the Center in particular. They insist that more could be done to prepare and support students but there are *'only 15 people in the Academic Support Office to run a variety of programmes'*.[133]

Moreover the advisors insist that many faculty, and the institution as a whole, are unwilling to make concessions to less confident adult learners. There is little enthusiasm for adjusting highly didactic forms of teaching and a lack of interest in some quarters in teaching at all.[134] The fact that small seminar groups are a rarity and that students can be taught in large classes of 50 or more does little to help. Assessment and supplementary tuition are often provided by graduate assistants rather than faculty which means that academic contact between staff and students is minimal. It is unsurprising, as Durost perceives it, that many students feel alienated from their teachers and withdraw.

The advisers give a further explanation for high rates of attrition: the absence of adequate information, guidance and counselling for students struggling to decide what to study. The system prides itself on offering wide choice but the students, it is alleged, are in a poor position to judge. Advice is unsatisfactory partly because of the large numbers of students but also the difficulty of getting sufficient information from faculty about courses and academic expectations.[135]

Whatever the causes of high rates of attrition, some senior faculty have become more insistent that under-prepared students should be the responsibility of the community colleges and not themselves. The Business Management School refuses to take any transfers from the community colleges at all on the grounds of student unpreparedness while other faculty argue for graduate college status and the prestige this would bring rather than 'remedial' work. The growing budget crisis in the State and cuts in expenditure have brought conflict and disagreement into the open - the question 'why all this money for developmental and access education?' is being asked with increased intensity.[136]

How representative is this picture of the position in American public universities more generally? Are there widespread indications of growing resistance to increasing access as

resources become more constrained? With the notable exception of committed staff in some specialist institutions have university academics as a whole been unwilling to adapt to a more diverse adult student population?

There are numerous indications of a reaction against widening access inside and outside the system. A recent article in the *Washington Post* offers a characteristic view in arguing that entry to a university education is too easy although the main target of criticism is under-prepared youngsters straight from school rather than adults. Standards, it is alleged, have fallen because of the open door policy which also serves to demotivate students from preparing properly for university:

> *A federal loan is the ticket to college for many students. We could require loan applicants to pass a test showing they can do 12th grade work. Only students who can handle college should go to college. States should shut down 10 percent to 20 percent of their colleges and universities, so schools wouldn't scrounge for students. States could also sharply raise their tuition costs and couple the increases with big boosts in scholarships. But to get scholarships, students would have to maintain a C average.*[137]

Particular criticism is reserved for affirmative action programmes. Most public universities in America are, at least according to mission statements, committed to recruiting more adults and young people from minority communities. Some go so far as to define a minimum quota of places, all of which provokes the accusation that the minorities, particularly blacks and Hispanics, enter university with lower marks thereby excluding better qualified (and white) candidates.[138] A number of factors produce these tensions including the growing insecurity of middle class whites as economic problems mount and it becomes difficult to meet the escalating cost of college education. Affirmative action, and the minorities, easily become scapegoats when times are hard.

The concern over standards is not, however, simply confined to the new right or a product of suburban insecurity. The Board of Regents in Massachusetts, in its report on the condition of higher education in the State, felt some universities and colleges were too lax in their academic expectations. But the problem, in this view, had little to do with equal opportunity policies.

It stemmed from the necessity, for financial reasons, for colleges to improve retention rates at a time of declining resources. According to the report colleges may adjust academic requirements to suit their self-interest when institutional survival is at stake; financial incentives favour those recruiting and retaining large numbers of people. But this coincides with a reluctance to improve teaching and academic support programmes, a deficiency made worse by declining resources. Anxiety over standards, the authors insist, should

focus rather more on the quality of the educational environment and the need for more public finance to sustain it than who obtains entry.[139]

As for the impact of adults on university culture, there is only limited research into the response of university teachers to increasing numbers of mature students. Most research has focused on analyzing the most appropriate support services for older learners.[140] Notwithstanding, the continuing emphasis placed on the necessity for more faculty development programmes in relation to adult students suggests that many academics have much to learn.[141] University teachers, as in this country, may be more interested in their subjects and opportunities to pursue research rather than pedagogic questions.[142]

There is, however, intense interest from all quarters in one aspect of access and the curriculum: the impetus given by widening access to multi-culturalism. Increased representation from minority groups fuels a long standing debate about what is being taught, about whose history, literature and perspectives are to be studied. In some institutions, such as Stanford University, courses on Western culture are being replaced by ones which emphasise works on race and gender by third world, minority or women authors.[143]

This has provoked a bitter reaction on the part of some academics and political groups. Neo-liberals such as Bloom[144] label such trends as tantamount to a betrayal of university values and the Western tradition. Thinkers of the calibre of Plato and Machievelli, it is alleged, are jettisoned in favour of obscure, second rate ideologues. The best that has been thought and written has become the victim of a relativistic doctrine which celebrates diversity and political correctness above merit or academic rigour.

The fate of experiential learning, and other more student-centred methodologies, has inevitably been affected by this climate. Progressive educational ideas have been under attack at every level which may partly explain the tendency for experiential methods to be confined to those universities and colleges with an outreach or adult brief. According to the Director of Experiential Learning at the College of Public and Community Service, Barbara Buchanan, experiential methods are employed in only 5% of higher education programmes in the country:

> *There has been a very difficult job in getting experiential learning accepted so we shouldn't over emphasise the extent of difference between the USA and the UK. There is resistance to change and the extent to which we are prepared to imagine a wide ranging, socially egalitarian remit for higher education. How come we are wasting all this talent? Why doesn't this population have a right to be developed to a point where a university education is possible?*[145]

Like multi-culturalism, the new right presents progressive

methods as yet another example of the retreat by universities from high standards, the authority of the teacher and the traditional curriculum. (Although, in general, the critics ignore adult learners and focus on the education of the young). The historic task of instruction and guidance to students is abandoned in favour of giving people what they want regardless of whether they know what this is and of their ignorance of matters which lie outside their experience.

The traditionalist's case is often stated in highly polarised terms. Thus Bloom advocates a return to set texts (mainly those produced by white, male authors from a European background) and ignores or considers inconsequential the white, male and European bias of conventional syllabuses. There are academics (and departments) at the other extreme who reject the Western canon in its entirety and insist exclusively on a study of third world, minority or feminist perspectives but they are a small minority.

Most reformers argue for minority and feminist writers as an antidote to the omissions of the Western cultural tradition rather than as a complete alternative to it. In Stanford's case, the defence is made that other courses guarantee prominence to traditional perspectives and the 'great books'. The biggest problem is that minority or feminist writing tends to be ignored or marginalised in the majority of university courses.

One way to transcend these debates is to argue, as Raymond Williams once did in a British context, that a university education should give access to the full range of myths and meanings which a society generates as well as encouraging learners to amend these in the light of personal and common experience: there is, or ought to be, a place for Plato, Frantz Fanon and personal experience.[146] The problem is that what is taught and how has become an intense battleground for an ideological and political struggle in which neo-liberals conceive their task as protecting the traditional, assimilationist function of the educational system. The struggle over access and thus the curriculum represents a wider struggle over the nature and values of American society itself.

6 REFLECTIONS: ACCESS, A RETREAT FROM THE MARGINS?

I have addressed two central issues in this study of access to higher education in America. First, the extent of progression for adults from under-represented groups from the bottom of the system (developmental education in the community colleges) to a place nearer the top (completing a degree). Second, the responsiveness of institutions and faculty in access and other programmes to the needs and experiences of an older, more diverse student body.

I used seven propositions as an analytical framework: first, that community colleges, given a local base and egalitarian remit, recruit large numbers of adults from under-represented groups; second, that the colleges provide a range of return to learn opportunities employing highly student-centred methods; third, that many poorly educated access students are encouraged to consider and enabled to transfer to university; fourth, that many public universities recruit and support adult students from under-privileged communities; fifth, that such universities, like community colleges, have been responsive, both in content and method, to an older, diverse student body; sixth, that continuing education, even in an Ivy League institution, offers a second chance, alternative route to a high status degree for adults from the inner-city. Finally, fuelling the momentum towards mass access is a meritocratic ideology which permeates higher education and the wider society at all levels.

The study has shown the truth to be more complicated and, at times, to contradict these hypotheses. On the credit side American higher education has achieved high levels of popular participation. The community colleges do provide an *entrée* to post-initial education for many adults and young people from the minority and low-income groups. Moreover, most colleges, and some universities, devote substantial resources to return to learn opportunities which range from basic literacy to supplementary tuition in the associate stage of degrees.

It is similarly the case that many poorly educated adults from the inner-city progress from developmental studies to a university degree while some university colleges recruit poorly educated adult workers and employ experiential methods thus enabling many to become effective students. And meritocracy has provided the ideological rationale for widening access and second chance opportunities. This represents the positive side of the story.

But there is a further dimension to the tale. Many inner-city students enter developmental programmes but drop out before entering the mainstream. Attrition rates are high in all programmes regardless of philosophy or method, although some access schemes perform better than others. Evidence from Roxbury, as well as wider research, indicates that retention rates improve when the curriculum is derived from student experience and relates to the problems of inner-city life. Learners respond positively to an educational culture in which they feel valued

and there is an atmosphere of co-operation and equality. The opportunity to learn and share academic and more personal matters in small groups seems particularly important to student progress.

Ironically, the co-operative ethic is antithetical to the dominant trends in contemporary political and educational thought. The emphasis is increasingly placed on competitive tests at all levels since for the new right competition is the spur to improved standards and increased student motivation. In practice, at least for adult learners in developmental education, tests may constantly remind those who struggle of their shortcomings in relation to others. Feelings of accumulated failure second time around can easily become too much to bear.

Contrary to my initial assumptions about the student-centredness of Access programmes, many methods were more reminiscent of traditional schooling than adult education. Content is frequently determined without reference to the learners while instructors may only have limited experience of adult education methods. The situation is exacerbated by the need to cope with large numbers of poorly motivated youngsters straight from school: the intense pressure creates little space to consider older learners and the most appropriate strategies for them.

Some developmental educators place exaggerated faith in new technology and individualised instruction to solve student problems. In fact computers can isolate students from one another and limit the amount of mutual support and stimulus available. While almost all centres employ computer assisted learning, it needs to be counterbalanced by substantial opportunities for small group work and highly interactive forms of learning. Of course, labour intensive methods cost more and may correspondingly be vulnerable, or difficult to justify, at a time of severe constraints in federal and state expenditure.

As for progression, the majority of community college students enrol for short vocational courses on completion of developmental studies. The choice effectively debars them from the option of transfer to university as the latter continue to insist on liberal, academic credits for transfer purposes. As more students opt for short vocational programmes the percentage of adults and younger learners from the inner-city moving to university or remaining in education of any kind has declined. Stated simply, the cause of wider access is in retreat.

The community colleges insist that vocational courses are what today's students want. Not everyone desires or is suitable for a university education. In fact research indicates that changed patterns of enrolment are more the consequence of the colleges' own actions than those of the students. It was the colleges who sought to persuade learners to enrol in new career programmes and some went as far as to impose quotas on liberal arts places. While it may be the case that some adults and young people needed little persuasion, particularly as the cost of education soared and the recession deepened, it is equally a fact that many colleges did little to offer them a true choice.

The access cause in universities also seems on the wane. Specific institutions, such as the College of Public and Community Service, are highly committed to providing more opportunities for inner-city communities. The College believes that many workers, particularly those with poor formal education, are attracted to university when they can see its relevance to immediate, occupational problems and their own experience.

Many working class and minority students have been attracted to and have succeeded in degree-level study as a result. Conversely, some students, given ease of entry, fail to progress beyond the developmental phase while others never obtain a degree. High rates of attrition may be the inevitable corollary of wider access, regardless of institutional policy and educational culture. In compensation the value placed by some institutions on applied skills and occupational competence, as well as more conventional academic requirements, means that those who withdraw have credits to show for their time in college.

The impact of large numbers of adult students from diverse backgrounds on university culture in general has been more limited than I supposed. Experiential methods, for example, appear confined to specific institutions with an explicit second chance or outreach remit. Furthermore, the present conservative climate is unconducive to progressive ideas of whatever kind, in universities as well as the schools. While there are a range of access and supplementary programmes to help learners in the early stages of their degree, many academics and institutions have been resistant to change. Such resistance has increased as the economic climate has worsened.

The arrival of more minority students in the system has, however, provided an impetus to multi-culturalism in the curriculum although the extent of change can be exaggerated. For every new course celebrating black or women writers, there are countless others which neglect minority voices. Nonetheless, neo-liberals assert that it is the retreat from the traditional canon, alongside the cult of student-centredness, which accounts for the ills of American higher education.

Other voices equate wider access with declining standards. Entry into the system has become too easy, reducing the quality of academic life and the motivation of students to prepare for serious study. Such criticisms are mainly directed at younger students but access in general has become unpopular among some university faculty. Remedial education, as they see it, is not their business or that of universities in general. More selective entry rather than greater access is what is required.

Such reactions miss some important points. Many of the new recruits from the inner-city prosper despite minimal additional assistance. Others progress to degrees as a result of developmental and supplementary tuition. The concept of standards being utilised by such critics is in any case inherently problematic in that it equates quality with the educational levels of entrants rather than what happens to students once they

embark on study.

In any event the evidence suggests that the decline in standards may be more the consequence of a fiercely competitive climate in higher education and the resulting imperative to improve retention rates to survive. The blame rests more with the institutions than the students. Moreover, high drop out has other institutional roots including the anonymity of some campuses, poor staff-student ratios and the lack of sufficient counselling and guidance. The problem is that the access revolution was never completed, not that it has travelled too far.

In some places it never properly began. While Harvard Division of Continuing Education provides a second chance for some learners, it tends on the whole to cater for a well educated, suburban middle class. In fact continuing education departments in general have played a minor role in the equal opportunities struggle. They recruit, with significant exceptions, those who enjoyed good first chances rather than more neglected constituencies.

Finally, what of meritocratic ideology and its role in the American system? There remains a widespread belief that opportunities are available to people of talent whatever their background, class or ethnic group. Social mobility and occupational success are available to those willing and able to strive. And it should be noted that social mobility remains more pronounced in America than most analogous societies.

However, a main finding of this study is that educational opportunities have become more unequal in recent years. The contradiction between the ideal of unlimited opportunity and the reality of constraints at the top has grown more severe as the economic climate has worsened. If higher education is the place where a prime tension in American culture is resolved it seems that this has been increasingly against the interests of those in the ghetto.

High drop out is one important expression of the 'cooling out' function at work. I am not suggesting that increased attrition is a result of deliberate institutional or government policy but nevertheless the effect is functional to the existing social system. The growing resistance among politicians to invest sufficiently in academic support programmes to stem the tide can partly be explained by reference to the suburban political agenda. While access and developmental education were a priority in earlier decades, the current reductions in expenditure mirrors middle class insecurity and defensiveness at a time of severe recession.

The contradiction between aspiration and the current political economy is also ameliorated by directing students into short vocational courses while maintaining the allusion of choice and equal opportunity. The community colleges have persuaded, overtly and covertly, many adults and young people that it is in their best interests to choose such courses and to reject the transfer

option. The fact that colleges largely acted out of self-interest and directed students has been obscured by a consumer-choice rhetoric designed to preserve the myth of equal chances for all.

In short I would argue that the colleges tend increasingly to legitimise structural inequalities rather than providing equal opportunities. Social theorists have long been interested in the mechanisms by which particular societies persuade those at the bottom of the necessity for large disparities in economic, social and political power. From this perspective the function of higher education in America becomes that of reconciling culturally induced hopes for mobility with structural limitations and the economic agenda of government and business. The doctrine of consumer choice serves to reinforce the notion that events are a product of individual action unrelated to questions of power, status and systemic discrimination. Unfortunately many poorer people continue to internalise this powerful myth.

I accept that not every adult or young person who enters a local college is equipped for university study. There has been a persistent problem for the community colleges of meeting the needs of those unsuited to or uninterested in academic study. Nonetheless, my central point remains valid: the colleges themselves, alongwith the recession, have conspired to persuade the majority of inner-city returners against the idea of university. There are many such people who might, given sufficient help and encouragement, have succeeded at the highest level. Twenty years ago more did: this is my prime evidence of a major retreat from the margins.

There is a further aspect to the concept of meritocracy in America. The emphasis is placed on equality of opportunity rather than of condition. But the last two decades have brought a growing deterioration in the material position of the poor: America's underclass currently constitutes a fifth of its population. While more resources are channelled into access and higher education than is the case in Britain, welfare, social security programmes and student grants have been reduced or eliminated completely. The worst casualties have been in the inner-city as the new right doctrine that welfare programmes stifle initiative and self-reliance has taken hold. In such circumstances the dream of occupational and social mobility may be stifled long before college is ever contemplated.

What I have therefore described is a retreat from the vision of greater opportunity and more responsive institutions. There are fewer adults and young people from the ghettoes transferring to university while more experientially-based, interactive forms of learning in higher education have, for the moment, been marginalised. Max Weber once suggested that one critical element in the power of dominant groups is their capacity to impose their own agenda on educational institutions and the curriculum. This is the essential truth of access to higher education in America during the last two decades: the democratic imperative has given way to a more limited vocationalism; progressive methods to a traditional, competitive ethic. The options and opportunities for

adults and young people in the inner-city have correspondingly narrowed.

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5. See, for example, the UCACE Report, *Working Party on Mature Student Entrance* (1988) for a review of the evidence.

6. See, for example, Alan Woodley et al, *Choosing to Learn: Adults in Education* (SRHE/Open University, 1987).

7. See Linden West, 'A Second Chance to Learn - Some Issues for Access', *Studies in the Education of Adults* Vol 21, No 2, Oct 1989, pp.156-175.

8. There is overwhelming evidence to support this. See, for example, *Adults, their Educational Experiences and Needs* (ACACE, 1982).

9. The American influence is clearly discernable in, for example, *More Means Different*.

10. Kent County Council, *Report on a Study Visit to Washington D.C.* (October, 1989).

11. The National Association for Developmental Education was founded fifteen years ago to improve *'the theory and practice of developmental and remedial education in post-secondary institutions'* and *'the professional capabilities of educators in the field.'*

12. I am indebted to my colleague Richard Gorringe for this information. He refers to the influence of places like Bunker Hill in an account of his own trip to the NADE Conference. Bunker Hill is also one of the colleges referred to in the Further Education Staff College Report, *Opportunity with Excellence*, the American Community College, Vol 20 no 8.

13. The distribution of questionnaires was non-random. 200 were distributed at the NADE Conference and during my visits. 50 were returned. This is a very small number and in no way representative of the wider access community. However, the questionnaires were completed by people working in a range of institutions across the country.

I also carried out 20 in-depth interviews during my visits to particular institutions and at the Conference. Selection was made on the grounds of people deemed to have specialist knowledge about developmental education or access to higher education in America.

14. See, for example, the article by Fox Butterfield, 'Weld Denting Massachusetts' Liberal Framework', *New York Times*, 17th October, 1991.

15. These figures come from two sources, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Washington, November, 1989 pp A35-38 and Department of Education and Science, *Aspects of higher education in the United States of America, A commentary by Her Majesty's Inspectorate* (HMSO, 1989).

16. UCACE, Op Cit.

17. HMI Report, Op Cit.

18. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Op Cit.

19. HMI Report, Op Cit.

20. UCACE Report, Op.Cit.

21. See, for example, Norman Evans, *The Knowledge Revolution, Making the Link between Learning and Work* (Grant McIntyre, 1981) for an account of this.

22. The following account of the origins and growth of the Colleges is mainly derived from Arthur M. Cohen and Florence B. Brawer, *The American Community College* (Jossey Bass, 1989).

23. For an account of the situation in California see Tom Schuller, 'Access and Articulation, observations on the Californian system of higher education', in *Journal of Access Studies*, Vol 2, No 2, 1987, pp. 58-65.

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25. See, for example, Steven Brint and Jerome Karabel, *The Diverted Dream, Community Colleges and the Promise of Educational Opportunity in America, 1900-1985* (Oxford, 1989).

26. Geoffrey Melling, 'The American Experience and the United Kingdom', in *Opportunity with Excellence*, Op Cit. pp.533-537.

27. See Brint and Karabel, Op Cit.

28. Burton Clark, 'The Cooling Out Function Revisited' in G.B. Vaughan (ed), *Questioning the Community College Role, New Directions for Community Colleges* (Jossey Bass, 1980).

29. For a summary of the evidence see Brint and Karabel, Op Cit. pp 224-225.

30. See, for example, Pierre Bourdieu, 'Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction', in Richard Brown (ed), *Knowledge, Education and Cultural Change* (Tavistock, 1973) pp. 71-112.

31. Ibid.

32. See Norman Evans, Op.Cit.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Bunker Hill Community College Fact Sheet, 1990.

36. Interview with the College President, Piedid Robinson, February, 1990.

37. Interview with the Director of Admissions, Janice Thomas, February, 1990.

38. Ibid.

39. This information comes from two main sources, College Annual Reports and a paper on Roxbury by Brunetta Reid Woodman, 'Success under Duress - The College and the Community' in *Opportunity with Excellence*, Op.Cit.

40. Wolfman, Op.Cit.

41. Ibid.

42. Roxbury Community College, *Five Year Plan*.

43. The phrase belongs to Piedid Robinson, Op Cit.

44. Quoted from *The Agreement between the Boston Area Universities and Colleges and the Public Schools*, revised 24/10/83.

45. This information and that in the following paragraphs comes from the interview with Piedad Robinson.

46. Bunker Hill Fact Sheet, 1990.

47. Roxbury Community College, *Five Year Plan*.

48. The information is obtained from the College's *Teaching and Learning Center Annual Report, 1987-8* and interviews in the Center.

49. *Final Report on the Year Ahead: The Undergraduate Experience*, Board of Regents of Higher Education, June 1989.

50. Gretchen Starks, 'Retention and Developmental Education: What the Research has to Say' in *Research and Teaching in Developmental Education*, Vol 6 no 1, Fall, 1989, pp. 21-32.

51. *The Final Report on the Year Ahead*, Op.Cit.

52. Robinson, Op Cit.

53. A summary of research findings is given in B. Hopson and M. Scally, *Education Towards Self-Empowerment* (McGraw Hill, 1981).

54. The idea is explained in Wolfman, Op. Cit.

55. The material I looked at is contained in various College papers and documents including, *Learning to Learn, The Co-ordinated Studies Program, A Collection of Essays*, (Fall 1988), the Teaching Learning Center's *Annual Reports* and the Center's *Teaching Manual*.

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57. Roxbury Community College, *Learning to Learn, The Co-ordinated Studies Program*.

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60. This information is derived from correspondence with the College.

61. The point is made in the College's submission for funding to the Illinois State Board of Education, July 1990-June 1992. The College kindly sent me a copy of this document.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

65. For an account of these developments see Stanley Aranowitz and Henry A. Giroux, *Education under Seige, The Conservative, Liberal and Radical Debate over Schooling* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986).

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67. Interview with Gerry Curley, February, 1990.

68. See, for example, Constance Morrison, 'A Literary, Whole Language Reading Program' in *Journal of Developmental Education*, Vol 14, Issue 2, Winter 1990 pp. 8-12.

69. Ibid.

70. Letter from Kathleen S. Teehan, Director of Grants and Contracts, July, 1990.

71. Aranowitz and Giroux (Op.Cit.) provide a detailed account of changing public attitudes and perceptions.

72. Ibid.

73. Knowles, Op.Cit.

74. There is by now an abundance of evidence on this. See, for example, A.J. Cropley, *Lifelong Education, A Pychological Analysis* (Pergamon/UNESCO, 1977) for a literature review.

75. As, for example, in an interview with Robert Lemelin from the University of Southern Maine and a senior member of NADE, March 1990.

76. I put this point to a seminar group at the NADE Conference in 1990. Of the 60 people participating in the discussion the overwhelming majority thought this interpretation was correct.

77. The evidence for this is culled from questionnaire replies as well as a seminar on andragogy at the NADE Conference in 1990. I asked a large group of developmental educators how familiar most developmental educators were with student-centred adult education methods. They felt that developmental education tended, on the whole, to reflect the philosophy of remedial education in schools rather than adult education and that this presented a major challenge to the developmental community.

78. E. Jane Malendez, *Student Empowerment in Developmental Schemes* (NADE, 1990).

79. See, for example, H.S.Becker, B.Geer and E.C. Hughes, *Making the Grade: the academic side of college life* (Wiley, 1968).

80. Starks, Op. Cit. p.29.

81. Charles S. Claxton, 'Learning Styles, Minority Students, and Effective Education' in *Journal of Developmental Education*, Vol 14, Issue 1, Fall 1990 pp. 6-8.

82. Brint and Karabel, Op Cit.

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid.

85. Cohen and Brawer, Op Cit.

86. See Brint and Karabel, Op Cit.

87. Evidence, for example, reported in Cohen and Brawer's study.

88. I participated in a seminar at the College with senior staff.

89. My interpretation is echoed in Brint and Karabel's research.

90. Round table interview with Isidore Julian and Collen Pence from the Teaching Learning Center at the College, March, 1990.

91.The evidence for this is once again derived from Brint and Karabel's research.

92. Interview with Julian and Pence.

93. A view developed by Julian and Pence.

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95. Brint and Karabel, Op.Cit.

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98. Ibid. Cohen and Brawer also provide a good account of the historical development of vocational programmes in the community colleges.

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112. These conclusions are derived from various sources including Leonard Freedman, *Quality in Continuing Education* (Jossey-Bass, 1987) pp. 16-7; also K.P. Cross, *Adults as Learners: Increasing Participation and Facilitating Learning* (Jossey-Bass, 1981).

113. Freedman, Op Cit pp. 18-19.

114. A full account of this is provided by Aronowitz and Giroux, Op Cit.

115. Interview with Barbara Buchanan, Director of Experiential Learning, February, 1990.

116. Ibid.

117. Ibid.

118. Ibid.

119. See, for example, A. Tough, *Intentional Changes; a fresh approach to helping people change* (Follet, 1983).

120. Interview with Buchanan.

121. Ibid.

122. Ibid.

123. Ibid.

124. Interview with Jema Dari, Dean of the College of Public and Community Service, February, 1990.

125. Ibid.

126. Ibid.

127. Interview with Buchanan.

128. Ibid.

129. Interview with Dari.

130. There are a number of dimensions to the assessment process and competency-based learning which need more detailed examination. There is the problem, for example, of translating personal experience into competencies which have been defined by others and the risk of categorising some elements of personal experience as unworthy. There is the criticism that a competency-based model can be crudely reductionist especially when applied to more academic subjects.

131. The information in this and the following paragraphs comes from an interview with Cynthia Durost of the College of Arts and Sciences, March 1990.

132. Only about half of those who enrol as full-time freshmen obtain a bachelor's degree in American public universities. See *Aspects of higher education in the United States of America*, Op Cit. p.30.

133. Interview with Durost.

134. This point emerged in a general round table discussion with the advisory staff.

135. Ibid.

136. Ibid.

137. Robert J. Samuelson, 'The College Charade' in *Washington Post Weekly*, June 18-24th 1990.

138. See, for example, Lucy Hodges, 'Clambering out of the "melting pot" ' in *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 5.4.91 p.9.

139. *Report to the Board of Regents*, Op Cit.

140. See, for example, Jovita M. Ross-Gordon, 'Critical Incidents in the Classroom: What do Adults Undergraduates perceive as effective teaching?' in NUCEA, *Continuing Higher Education Review*, Vol 55, No. 1 and 2, 1991 pp. 14-33.

141. Ibid.

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144. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind; how Higher Education has failed Democracy and impoverished the souls of today's students* (Penguin, 1987).

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Appendix 1: The Boston Trip Questionnaire

Introduction

There is a growing consensus in the U.K. that more needs to be done to increase the number and range of adults studying in a variety of forms of education. The reasons for the interest vary but include a widespread belief that the country's economic well-being depends in part on achieving higher educational standards throughout the population.

There is also a view, which I share, that the present distribution of educational opportunity is indefensible on the grounds of social equity and justice. For example, those in manual occupations, women and the ethnic minority communities are badly under-represented in higher education.

There is great interest in examining the U.S.A.'s experience since the evidence clearly indicates that the United States does much better than the U.K.in ensuring that more adults in general participate in a variety of forms of higher, adult and continuing education. I would like to understand more about why this is including examining in detail the tradition of part-time study, modularisation and credit accumulation. It is also true that higher proportions of people stay on in initial education which may be an important factor in effecting participation rates. I am less certain about how well the system works for particular social groups such as the black population. As I understand it blacks, for example, have a high drop-out rate in pre-college education. Various "affirmative action " programmes have been set up in response and I would like to share your experience of these programmes and other strategies to increase participation rates among particular groups.

I am visiting Boston to explore some of these issues in detail. I would like to ask a few questions about the nature of continuing/adult/higher education in the region and the work of your institution. I want to examine whether there are any specific lessons from your experience which can help us - particularly in enabling under-represented groups to enter AND progress within the system. (These questions are intended as a guide rather than necessarily to be followed rigidly). The questions cover recruitment, the curriculum, teaching and learning styles, progression, counselling and student support, retention rates and wider issues to do with institutional culture. I would like to tape your answers if this is O.K. I will be producing a report in due course and will send you a draft copy for comment.

1 Could you first of all describe to me the nature of your institution's work with adults?

2 What do you consider to be the key to the substantial participation rates by adults, at least in comparison with the U.K., in a range of higher, adult and continuing education programmes? (The assumption at home is that one important key to enabling students to progress within your system is widely accepted credit transfer arrangements covering what we would call further as well as higher education. Community Colleges are also thought to be important in making it relatively easy for students to move from say basic education into other opportunities. Is this the case in your view? Are there other factors to take into account which enable (or don't) students to progress, for example, into higher education?

3 Do your institution's mission statement or objectives include a commitment to recruiting adults from under-represented groups into your programmes? If so, in what way? Do you think this is important or are opportunities fairly accessible in any case?

4 In what specific ways (if any) do you recruit students from underprivileged communities (for example the various ethnic groups) or high school drop-outs? Are there particular initiatives in relation to outreach/marketing?

5 Are you successful in recruitment, if so in what way and how do you explain it? Are there particular initiatives that would merit further detailed study?

6 What about initial guidance and counselling? Do you operate with other agencies given the likely wide range of needs?

7 The assumption in the U.K. is that there is a price to pay in terms of increased access - high levels of drop-out. How do you view this?

8 Turning to curriculum issues, I am interested in student involvement in determining what is studied, the use of interactive teaching methods and ways to nurture a range of learning skills among educationally unconfident adults. How are these matters approached?

9 What of more general matters to do with institutional culture and adult students? One observer has stated that attention in your institutions is increasingly being focused on " attrition, retention and on new meanings of quality and good practice, rather than merely on access." And what of issues like creche provision, counselling and welfare services to deal with a range of needs and problems adult learners may face?

10 What of financial support for adult students especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds or single parents etc.?

11 What monitoring is undertaken of student progress, retention and drop-out? How is this information used?

12 I'm very conscious of being fairly ignorant about the education of adults in your country. Are there any questions you think I should have asked and haven't and/or do you have suggestions about other institutions and projects to see as well as books and articles to read?

Please return to

Linden West, Lecturer in the Theory and Practice of Continuing Education, University of Kent at Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NX.

Appendix 2: Supplementary Questions

TO: THE PRESIDENT, PIEDAD ROBERTSON, BUNKER HILL COMMUNITY COLLEGE, NEW RUTHERFORD AVENUE, BOSTON, MASS. 02129.

FROM: LINDEN WEST.

FURTHER TO MY VISIT EARLIER IN THE YEAR, I AM COMPLETING A PAPER ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE AND WONDERED WHETHER YOU COULD PROVIDE ME WITH SOME FIGURES FOR BUNKER HILL:

1 RETENTION AND ATTRITION RATES IN DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

2 THE NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF DEVELOPMENTAL STUDENTS PROGRESSING INTO MAINSTREAM CREDIT COURSES.

3 THE TIME (IN YEARS) THAT EX-DEVELOPMENTAL STUDENTS WHO GRADUATE FROM THE COLLEGE TAKE, AFTER ENTERING MAINSTREAM PROGRAMS, TO COMPLETE ASSOCIATE DEGREES, FOR EXAMPLE, IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER STUDENTS.

4 RETENTION AND ATTRITION RATES FOR EX-DEVELOPMENTAL STUDENTS IN MAINSTREAM CREDIT PROGRAMS IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER STUDENTS.

5 THE PERCENTAGE OF EX-DEVELOPMENTAL STUDENTS PROGRESSING ONTO FOUR YEAR SCHOOLS.

6 THE PERCENTAGE OF BUNKER HILL STUDENTS IN GENERAL PROGRESSING TO FOUR YEAR INSTITUTIONS

7 INFORMATION ON THE AGE OF DEVELOPMENTAL STUDENTS.

I HOPE IT IS POSSIBLE TO PUT THIS INFORMATION TOGETHER FOR ME. THE INFORMATION WOULD BE APPRECIATED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. I WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU COULD FAX IT TO ME.

MANY, MANY THANKS FOR ALL YOUR HELP.

LINDEN WEST.